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SHORT STORIES.

No. 744.] Week ending April 4. 1903. [Price One Penny

He struck a match and went forward. By the dim light he could see the form of a woman lying chained to the bed. "Daisy," he cried, as the light fell on her face, "my love! Why are you here?"

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A Prisoner's Incidents from the Story. | A CHANGE OF IDENTITY. | See inside.)

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Short Stories

No. 744.] [One Penny.

For the Week Ending April 4th, 1903.

Containing the Incident Depicted on the Cover.

A Change of Identity.

The Story of a Double Wrong.

"Prompt action was necessary," said Mr. Josiah Wilkins, solicitor, to his son Henry, "so I wired for Netta to come at once, and she will, I hope, be here as soon as Daisy Penfold."

"And then?" queried Henry.

Josiah Wilkins meditated for a while, and his son's mind went over the facts of the matter which was necessitating prompt action.

David Millar was a wealthy gentleman with only two relatives, two nieces, Netta Morris and Daisy Penfold. The latter was his favourite, for the former he entertained the greatest aversion. He had made a will, by which he left about half his fortune in charitable bequests and the remainder to Daisy Penfold.

It was Josiah Wilkins' object to obtain a goodly share of the wealth for Netta Morris, who was his brother's step-daughter, although Millar did not know this last fact, having refused to take any interest in that side of his family connections.

Millar had agreed to make a will, but his purpose was to leave all his money to Daisy; so Wilkins had conceived the plan of getting Millar into his office to sign the will, but, just as he was about to append his signature to have the electric light fuse tampered with so that the office would be in darkness for a few minutes.

This would enable him to substitute another document, giving all to Netta; the testator and witnesses (these last not knowing the contents of the will) would sign, and there could be no dispute after the old man's death. But Millar had been taken dangerously ill quite suddenly, and had himself sent a telegraphic summons to Daisy Penfold.

The will not having been signed, he intended to cross out the charitable bequests in the old will, and to hand his safe keys to Daisy in the presence of the witnesses, Wilkins and his son, which formalities would constitute a valid bequest.

"There is only one thing to be done," said Josiah Wilkins. We must have that money or we shall have to flee the country very soon, for there are several trust moneys I can't account for! So we must substitute persons instead of names. Daisy and Netta are somewhat alike, and neither is known here. As soon as Millar has done the trick, we must get rid of Daisy, and Netta must become Daisy!"

Henry nodded.

"You don't mean murder, I suppose?" he asked quietly.

"Gracious, no!" cried Josiah Wilkins, turning pale. "We must keep her confined."

"Boyle will do that!" declared the son. "He will jump at the chance, as an experiment; and, after a time, she will come out, not only harmless to us, but a witness in our favour, having lost her identity!"

They elaborated their diabolical plan, and then went to Millar's house to await the coming of Daisy.

When she arrived she was met by Josiah, who introduced himself, and escorted her to the darkened room where her uncle lay. The only person there, other than Millar, was Henry Wilkins.

The old man and woman, who acted as servants, had been kept out by Wilkins, who declared that when they, he and his son, acting as legal advisers, had finished their business, they would retire and the servants could enter.

Was there any doubt that Millar would die quickly? That was the only immediate danger. They felt convinced that he would last only a little longer; they had even been apprehensive that he might die before the arrival of Daisy.

"Uncle!" called the girl softly, striving her hardest to keep back the tears. He had been kind to her, so kind! She had never been to his house to stay, but he had visited her at school, and had seen that she was well cared for. "Uncle!" she called again.

The old man came to himself with a start, and looked about him eagerly. The girl uttered his name, and took his hand; the touch quickened him into life. He called her by name and seemed to regain his strength.

"I have made a will, Daisy!" he said, speaking hurriedly, as if afraid that he would not have time to say all he wished. "I have crossed some out—it is all for you now—Wilkins has arranged—take these keys! There! You witness it, Wilkins? Where is he?"

The old man's strength was maintained till he had performed the formality which Wilkins had been successful in making him understand, but he afterwards fell back exhausted.

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Daisy, forgetful of her inheritance, scarcely comprehending these formalities, bent over the pallid face and kissed it. The tears welled to her eyes, as she turned anxiously, desperately to Wilkins and asked what could be done. She did not notice that Henry Wilkins had left, and she had heard nothing of the hurried consultation between father and son. The time had arrived for setting the plot afoot!

"Nothing can be done, my dear young lady," responded Wilkins sorrowfully. "The end is at hand. Let me take you away!"

But Daisy refused to move, and Wilkins waited impatiently till a deep sigh came from Millar. Daisy had never seen death and she thought this was the end. Wilkins seized the opportunity, telling her that all was over, although he knew better. Daisy uttered a subdued cry of bitter grief, and suffered herself to be led from the presence of the one who had done so much for her.

Wilkins summoned the servants to the room by a bell; they saw the girl, her face buried in her hands, walking feebly by the side of the solicitor, and the old woman's heart went out to her. She was about to offer to conduct the young lady to her room, but Wilkins waved her back.

Unknown to Daisy Penfold, Wilkins locked her in her room, and remained on guard at the head of the stairs. He was not easily moved, but the position of affairs agitated him. He was waiting for Henry Wilkins to return with Netta.

The doctor might come in at any moment, and so complicate matters; Daisy might wish to go to the room of the supposed dead man, and might raise her voice in alarm, and downstairs lay a man whose life was fast ebbing away, and whose property was being stolen by the villains who were wishing for his speedy end, and pretending to be his friends.

"He must be dead by now!" muttered Wilkins angrily. "What a time Harry is! I hope nothing has prevented Netta from coming! What's that?"

In the stillness he heard a faint cry, a weird sound that struck terror into his soul for the moment. It came from downstairs.

"Pshaw!" The cold drops stood on his brow. "Is that the end of Millar?"

Then a ring at the bell. Wilkins hurried below, and admitted two persons.

"All is ready!" whispered Harry. "Here is Netta. Can we get Daisy down? Is Millar dead?"

"I think—I hope so!" was the trembling reply. "Quick! Have you the chloroform?"

"Yes!"

They crept upstairs, Netta following. Unlocking the door, the three entered. Daisy, who knelt by the bed with her face buried in the clothes, looked up with tear-stained face as she felt a touch on the shoulder. Instantly something was clapped to her face and she found herself powerless and perceiving strange visions.

The two men lifted the senseless form and carried her downstairs, and within three minutes she was being conveyed by road to Dr. Boyle's private nursing home in a remote part of Kent.

The three conspirators returned to Millar's room. He still breathed, much to their disappointment. The servants were once more dismissed, and the three plotters waited.

"He won't come round again!" said Henry. "We are safe enough!"

As if to belie his words, Millar opened his eyes, and, by an effort, sat bolt upright in bed. His eyes were wide open, and he glared at them.

"Where is Daisy?" he asked, in a shrill voice. Then, as Netta stepped forward, he cried aloud, in anguish and terror, "No, no! You are robbing me! I feel it, I know it! I felt it as I reached the borderland, and I have come back to prevent it!

"You are robbing me, robbing me! I know it! I feel it! Restore what you have taken! Right the wrong!" he shrieked.

He raised his hand and pointed a terrible finger at them all, while they stood paralysed with fear at this awful re-awakening, this return of strength, shrinking from the warning finger, and trying to shut the spectacle from their eyes. "Heaven will send its wrath down on you! Help, help! I am robbed—robbed!"

That was his last effort. He fell back, the terrible warning finger still pointing at them. The stiffening arm and finger slowly descended to the coverlet, but it was still pointing at them. Millar was dead.

* * * * *

Dr. Boyle's nursing home was situated in a very lonely part of Kent, as plenty of fresh air was essential to cure. It was a spacious house, but it was practically empty, for very few patients came to it. Boyle lived there with one servant, an elderly woman, partly deaf.

When he had good-paying patients, Dr. Boyle engaged a nurse, but that was not often. He was usually regarded, by the few who knew him, as a crank; he had certain theories which he tried to work out, and in which he had a firm belief.

He was the sort of man to lend himself to such a plot as that hatched by the Wilkinses, and he would be quite an innocent accomplice. To him it would be a scientific experiment, and it would not occur to him that he was doing wrong.

"The experiment is going on capitally!" he murmured, rubbing his hands gleefully. "This young woman will completely lose her identity in time! Let me see! Yes, she has been here one month. At first she was a trouble, a great trouble! She didn't give the least hope of success, but that made her a good subject for experiment, and will prove the accuracy of my theory! I'll go and see her again!"

He ascended the stairs to a room on the first floor. Listening at the keyhole and hearing nothing, he cautiously unlocked the door and entered.

The room was in darkness; he lighted a candle which stood on the mantelpiece, and the light revealed a bedstead, with the form of a woman lying on it. He approached the bed and held the candle so that he could obtain a good view of the figure, and surveyed it with a calm and critical eye.

It was Daisy Penfold! She was asleep or insensible on the bed, her wrists were encircled with a chain which, at the other end, was attached to the head of the bed.

"H'm! Asleep!" murmured Dr. Boyle thoughtfully. "That will do her good. She is tired out with her tantrums! I was sorry to chain her, but it was necessary to prevent her from throwing herself against the door, and it will also help in the experiment, as the electricity will be attracted to the metal, and then to her brain through the wrists!"

He straightened himself and paced noiselessly about the apartment. He cut a queer figure, dressed as he was in a silk hat, and ready for a walk, but still holding the lighted candle.

"It's a grand idea, and it shows how backward are our men of science that they ridicule it as impossible!" he went on. "The object of this particular test is to make that girl believe she is not herself, but some other girl—some mythical creature whom we call Netta Morris.

"She is to lose, entirely, her former identity, and to believe that she has been brought up under another name, and in absolutely different circumstances. This is done by means of electricity.

"This chamber is pervaded by the subtle force; it oozes

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into the room from a dozen points. It gets into her brain, changes the convolutions, affects the grey matter, and brings about a phenomenon similar to that occasionally caused by an accident, where people quite forget who they are, forget that they were expert typists and what not.

"Only, I go further and cause the patient to assume another identity! And when once that is accomplished, nothing will ever undo it!

"This girl is losing her identity; in a week or ten days, she will be Netta Morris. I can then let her go; she will not be mad, not in the least! She will be perfectly sane, but she will be somebody else—and ready to swear to it!"

He bent over the unfortunate girl once more. She moved uneasily, opened her eyes, and hastily rose from the bed and stood before him with eyes flashing angrily.

"Go away!" she cried. "Why do you put me in irons, in chains, like a criminal?" She raised her arms and the chain clanked. "Release me and leave me! Oh, dear! what is it?"

She lifted her manacled hands and passed them over her forehead. She seemed dazed now. Dr. Boyle smiled complacently.

"You will be well soon, Netta Morris," he said, in a soft, purring tone. "Have patience, be quiet, and you will be leaving here soon."

"Why do you call me by that name?" demanded the girl. "Yet—yet it seems that it is my name. I thought I was—was Daisy something. Netta, Netta?" She sank on the bed in perplexity and gazed vacantly at the floor.

Dr. Boyle smiled again. "Some food will be brought to you when I return from my walk," he said, "and you will feel better!" He turned on his heel and left poor Daisy Penfold to wrestle vainly with the mystic force that was changing her identity.

While Daisy was being thus tortured in the name of science, at the investigation of villains and the hands of a fanatic, the three conspirators were taking things easily in the house of the eldest, Mr. Josiah Wilkins.

The pseudo Daisy, otherwise Netta, was living there for the time, it having been considered advisable to leave Millar's house. Some money had been advanced to the heiress by the executor, a former colleague of Millar, who was not moving so quickly in the matter of proving the will as Wilkins liked.

In the new will, had it been signed, he would have been executor, and he was getting anxious about his position. He had already secured Netta's signature to a deed transferring half the property to himself and his son, as soon as she should enter into possession.

They found Netta quite willing to act in accordance with their wishes, for she worshipped gold, as old Wilkins had said, and would do anything for it—that is, she was agreeable on all points save one, and that was to receive the matrimonial proposals of Henry Wilkins. Had this been necessary in order to secure money, she would not have hesitated; but it was not necessary.

"I think things are going well," remarked Josiah Wilkins easily. There was a great contrast between his appearance now and when the dead finger was pointing at him. "We may, I am sure, consider that we are safe. Candidly, I quite fail to see any chance of identification. How about *her?*"

"Going on satisfactorily, according to Boyle," answered Henry.

"When she comes out, we can give her a few hundreds to help her," said Netta with callous indifference.

"Well, I'll be off now and leave you young people to yourselves," observed Josiah Wilkins. "I daresay you have something to say to one another which old fogeys like myself do not want to hear."

"Exactly!" approved Henry.

"No, we haven't!" snapped Netta, rising to go.

She followed the elder man from the room and passed into one of the reception rooms. With a face dark with anger, Henry put on his hat and coat and stalked out of the house.

Netta sat in solitude, alternately reading and meditating. She did not intend to marry Henry, so much was certain, but her heart longed for the love of a man of her choice. Where would she meet him?

She was interrupted in her none-too-pleasant reflections by a servant. A gentleman to see Miss Daisy Penfold; the name on the card was Cyril Mortimer. Netta ordered the servant to usher the visitor into her presence.

"I don't know the name, but I may as well see him! It makes a change!" she mused.

A young man entered. As soon as the door closed behind him, he made a hurried step forward.

"Daisy, at last!" The voice was eager. "Why did you not write to tell me that——" He broke off abruptly as Netta advanced. "I beg your pardon!" he stammered in confusion; "I have—the servant has—made a mistake!"

"My name is Daisy Penfold," declared Netta calmly, not foreseeing the danger. This young man charmed her; she tried to be pleasing. "You came to see me? I have not the pleasure of knowing you."

It was not exactly conventional, but that did not matter to Netta.

Mr. Cyril Mortimer became grave; this girl was so unlike the Daisy he knew, in manner, that if her form and voice had been the same he would have known that she was not his Daisy.

"There is some great error," he said earnestly. "You are not the Miss Penfold whom I know. I must apologise for the intrusion."

Netta was sad; she did not want this young man, so tall and so handsome, to pass out of her life. Yet she could do nothing to prevent it, and in her absorption she forgot to make even a plausible attempt at explaining the difficulty. When Mortimer was gone, she realised the position.

"What a donkey I am!" she cried, clasping her hands. "I ought to have told him that she had run away, disappeared. He will try to find her! We have overlooked this chance of identification. We forgot that she might have a lover!"

It is strange to notice how the cleverest rogues often leave a weak spot in an elaborate plan; this is what the Wilkinses had done.

Josiah and Henry were disturbed when they heard the news, but after reflection they regained their composure.

"It will be impossible for him to find her," said Henry. "It destroys our chance of bringing her forward, should we want to, as Netta Morris, but I fancy that we shall not want to do so. When she is thoroughly 'treated,' we can send her away. It's all right! At the same time, it teaches us that it may be well to realise old Millar's estate and invest the cash abroad!"

Mr. Cyril Mortimer was not satisfied. He had heard that Daisy had gone to her uncle; that uncle was dead, and Daisy was said to be living in the solicitor's house; but *that* Daisy was not his love.

He went back to the old servants, but they told him that there was no possibility of two Daisy Penfolds.

Cyril set his teeth hard and vowed to find his lost love. He hung about the residence of the Wilkins and acted the part of amateur detective, as well as employing one to trace Daisy from the time she was seen off in the train *en route* for her uncle's house.

On the third day he was rewarded. He saw the father and son go out together and shadowed them. They stopped at the post-office, talking, while

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Henry held a letter, ready to drop into the box when he had finished. Cyril strolled casually past them, and his keen eye caught a part of the writing on the envelope. "Boyle" and "Kent."

He set to work at once to find out the name of Boyle, applying to a firm of envelope addressers. Love is said to be blind, but at times it has keen sight.

Cyril saw hazily through the deep mist, a mist that would have baffled all save the keen mental vision of a lover. He immediately grasped the fact that Daisy might be detained in this nursing home.

He was soon watching the place, after having gleaned some information about it. He saw Boyle go out and he made a bold move; he knocked at the door, and said he had been sent to inspect the small electric plant, as something had gone wrong, and the old lady let him in. Within fifteen minutes he had eluded the old dame's vigilance and was at Daisy's door.

His heart beat more quickly as he tried the door and found it unlocked. Was it Daisy within? He hoped and believed so. He peered in. All was dark; it was a room without a window. He struck a match and went forward.

"Daisy!" he cried, his hopes and fears realised as the light fell on the figure of the girl he loved. "Daisy, my love! Why are you here?"

She looked at him with unknowing eyes; she did not recognise him. He stepped back in horror as he noticed this, even in the poor light; then he heard the chilling clank of chain and his heart contracted with fear as he perceived that she was chained to the bed.

"Daisy, my darling. what have they done to you?" he cried in agonised tones. "Don't you know me, dear? It is Cyril!"

"I am Netta Morris," she replied coldly. "Why do you call me Daisy? When are you going to take these chains from my wrists?"

Cyril Mortimer was beside himself with grief, rage, and terror.

"I'll soon have the chain from your wrists!" he cried.

He dashed from the apartment and down the stairs, where he found a heavy poker. He met the old woman on his return, but he pushed her aside and left her screaming "Murder!" and "Help!"

He cared for nothing now. In a moment he was with Daisy. With one powerful blow he smashed the link attached to the bedstead, and Daisy was so far free.

"Daisy, Daisy!" he cried in anguish. "Oh, Heaven! What have they done to my love?"

In his agony he caught her in his arms, pressed her to his breast, and rained kisses upon her sweet face, calling her by endearing terms all the while. He felt her quiver under his caresses, and, a moment later, a wild cry burst from her lips.

Love had undone the work of science and villainy; she knew him, her memory returned with a rush, and she cried:

"Cyril, my love!"

A sound at the door caused them to turn; they saw Dr. Boyle glaring at them. He pulled the door quickly, and they heard the key in the lock.

"We will soon settle that!" cried Cyril, seizing the poker. "Follow me, Daisy, and we will regain freedom!"

With a mighty smash he shivered the lock and panel, and they went out. Boyle retreated before the threatening poker, and there was no obstacle to liberty. Within half-an-hour Daisy was rid of her manacles, and, after a rest, the lovers returned to London, where Cyril placed Daisy in safety.

Cyril had hoped to catch the Wilkinses by prompt action, but a telegram from Boyle warned them and they fled, taking what money they could realise, which was very little. They left Netta in the lurch, to face the consequences alone.

Dr. Boyle was sentenced to imprisonment as a criminal lunatic; he was scarcely that, but he was not a fit person to be left at liberty to do mischief in the name of science.

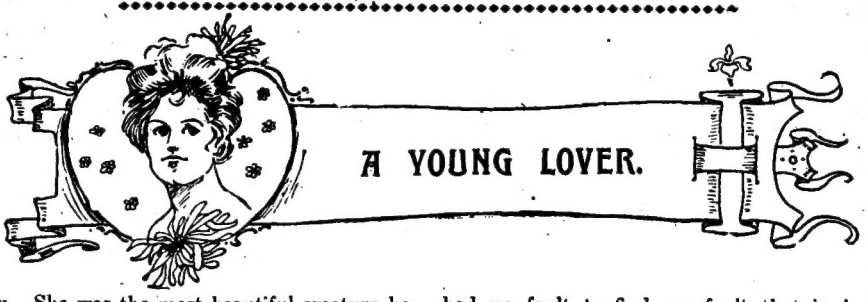
His great regret was that he had not been able to properly complete his experiment, owing to Cyril's appearance; two or three days longer, he said, and the experiment would have been finished.

At Daisy's request, Netta was allowed to go without punishment.

"I am sorry for you, Netta," she said gently, "and I will give you an annuity, so that you may never want. Go away and be penitent!"

Netta's eyes filled with tears at this unexpected treatment, and she left her cousin's presence with broken words of thanks.

George Day.



He loved her — very much. He thought that he had never loved half so much before. And she? Well, she may have loved him; that he didn't know—he hadn't asked her.

She was twenty. She was the most beautiful creature he had seen. Her hair was black—as ink; her skin was white—as a lily; and her eyes—how brilliant they were! They seemed to look into his soul. And he wondered if she knew it.

He had never seen anybody so ravishing to look at—not even in fancy. He had never before left his food half-tasted on his plate—not even at the seaside hotel. He had never before found it a task to close his eyes at night—not even when he had been ill with fever.

As for her, she looked upon him with favour; she would take his hand as they walked along the beach, and when the waves rolled further than she expected on the sand, she would cry, "Look out, Harry, dear," or the like.

He presumed he ought to be happy—there was no reason why he should not be; others in his position would have been.

Ah, yes; it was well enough—until the five o'clock express from London came in. Then she would be dressed in something wonderful in blue and gold, or in grey and black, or in pink and white, and she would walk in the gardens of the hotel and chat and gossip with the men who had been in town all day. Of course, when he came up, she treated him civilly, and he had no fault to find—no fault, that is, in order. Yet he asked himself sometimes if she was treating him as one individual, or as a species.

Ah, well! One day, fourteen trunks were loaded on the van at the side door. A good many of the trunks belonged to her. She was going away.

She came to him. She was dressed for travelling, in a tailor-cut gown with plaitings of Indian cloth on the front of the bodice, and with a black veil that could not hide the sparkle of her eyes. She held out her hand to him in good-bye, and then impulsively she took his head in her hands and kissed him.

What a thrill went through him!

He looked up—she was gone! Quickly he heard the rumbling of the van. Then he heard nothing—except that he imagined that he heard his heart beat.

He was all alone, and he let his head drop on his breast, and he cried as though his heart would break.

For, after all, he was only six years old.

O. P. W.

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BRAND NEW COMPETITION. ‖ *Start To-day.*

Cash Down. *Cash Down.* *Cash Down.*

1st Prize, £50. 2nd Prize, £25. 3rd Prize, £10.

and 25 Gramophones.

THIS IS AN ENTIRELY NEW COMPETITION AND IS NOW PLACED BEFORE THE PUBLIC FOR THE FIRST TIME. IT IS EXCEEDINGLY SIMPLE, AND IS OPEN TO EVERY PERSON WHO READS "SHORT STORIES."

WHAT YOU HAVE TO DO.

Below will be found six paragraphs containing the buried names of Railway Stations in the United Kingdom (or words that sound the same as the names). You must write in the spaces given the names of the Railway Stations so indicated.

No word or part of a word may be used more than once in making up the name of a Railway Station. In the event of the name of a Railway Station occurring more than once in a sentence, it should be underlined and written down each time. In case of more than one person finding the same number of words for each or any sentence, those words containing the largest number of letters will have preference.

When you have discovered the names of Railway Stations in the sentences, underline (in ink) the words which go to make up the names (or words that sound the same as the names) and then on the line underneath each sentence write (in ink) the correct names of the Railway Stations to be found in each.

All the names will be found in the Index to Railway Stations in the January edition of Bradshaw's Guide. Should you be unable to obtain a copy of this Guide, a reprint of the Index will be sent to you for three penny stamps on application to *Bradshaw's Guide*, 59 Fleet Street, London, E.C.; or Room Eight, SHORT STORIES, 17 and 18 Henrietta Street, London, W.C.

The names of the Railway Stations consist of one word or two or more consecutive words, or consecutive parts of one word, or two or more consecutive words.

The first prize of £50 will be given to the Competitor who fills in the greatest number of railway stations under the conditions stated.

The second prize of £25 will go to the person who fills in the next greatest number, and the other prizes will be awarded in the order of merit.

When you have filled in all the names you can find, cut out the list below and keep it by you. Don't on any account send it to us until the closing date is announced in SHORT STORIES. A third list of sentences will appear next week.

In the event of a tie a further list (or, if necessary, several further lists) of sentences will be submitted to the tieing competitors until one wins the first prize outright.

<——CUT THROUGH HERE——>

EXAMPLE.

The oaks were swaying in the breeze, the cows were grazing peacefully, when out of the park tore a huge black bull.

The Oaks, Sway, Cowes, Grays, Park, Black Bull.

SECOND LIST.

7. You might send Brown down for the cape Lucy Timmins left at the Manor, she will brook no delay.

8. The mallow, rose, mountain ash, berried plants, and Indian corn would make any garden pretty.

9. They wrestled for a star, crossing over after every genuine round. O'Connor O'Cluny was victorious.

10. Several shots were fired on a Monday morning, so scenting danger, on the succeeding mornings I departed earlier than usual for business.

11. He carved four crosses, one on each of the four stones; he also said he was willing to number Lizzie Claxby's flock of sheep.

12. We conned over the manual of Ho-Lang-Ho, the Chinaman. It contained pictures of the Botanic Gardens and its famous pear tree.

NAME..... **ADDRESS**.....

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With His Own Words.

Telling of How Love Was Revealed.

Stephen Annerly and Ethelwyn Macey had grown up side by side in the old provincial town that was a mere village when they were born.

He was older than she by three years, but they had been schoolfellows and playmates during their earlier years, when a difference of thirty-six months does not count.

He had been the first to leave the old school, and, as he worked in the field he had watched her tripping across the meadow on her way to the little house in which instruction was imparted.

Somehow, neither of them had been exactly like other village children. Each was endowed with feelings far above the ordinary level, and was regarded with suspicion and defiance by those who should have been their playmates also.

As time went on the difference of three years became more apparent, and the two former playmates stood aloof from one another, hesitating and shy.

Stephen had left the fields and entered the warehouse in the rapidly-growing town. She had left school and was acting as companion to the daughter of a well-to-do business man who had made his home in Belsham, just outside the lower portion of the borough, for the sake of his child's health.

The familiar meadow had vanished, and in its place stood rows of houses; a great change had come over Belsham, but the feeling that had existed within the recesses of Stephen's heart had not changed except insomuch as it had become stronger.

Ethelwyn Macey! All he did or thought was for her or because of her! He took up his pen and felt himself transformed into a poet when he permitted himself to reflect on the vision of the girl tripping across the meadow.

He wrote poetry—heartfelt, moving verses, full of subtle sentiment and not the maudlin doggerel that so often passes for it. There was talent within him, and this talent found expression only when he thought of her.

He wrote of the dawn, and told her that she resembled it; he wrote of storm and darkness, and tried to make her understand that, without her, his life would be as the tempest and the night. He sent the verses to her, and waited for some sign from this budding woman, but none came.

Then the business man removed elsewhere, and Ethelwyn went with the family. Never a word of acknowledgment reached him, only a timid glance in his direction when their paths crossed. So she went, and with his teeth set hard Stephen Annerly turned his attention to the warehouse and laid aside his poetic pen.

He sought distraction in hard work, and he found himself at the end of seven years at the head of a growing business nearly two hundred miles from the place of his birth.

Business had at first afforded him all the scope he needed for his superabundant energy, but nothing succeeded like success, and he saw his business increasing almost without effort on his part. He had time to spare.

He furnished a large flat and lived in it with a manservant, wondering why he had no desire to demand in marriage the hand of one of the many ladies with whom he came in contact. Other people wondered also, but they were unlike Stephen in one respect—they had no answer to their questions, but the reply came readily enough to him. It was Ethelwyn Macey, and that reply was all-sufficing!

In the meantime Ethelwyn had left the family with which she had lived for so long and had gone abroad. In the land of music, Italy, she revealed herself. Her whole being was music; it throbbed in every nerve.

It had been crushed, oppressed, by her surroundings, although she had had opportunities of satisfying her longing to the extent of learning to play and sing, and acquiring a knowledge of the laws of harmony.

Thus it came about that the sojourn in Italy was like setting a blazing torch to a pile of timber; there was a sudden flame, and Ethelwyn Macey was an altered woman.

She worked to support herself and studied at the same time; then she began to compose, and little by little her compositions gained celebrity and her assumed name became a household word in her own country. Her songs were sung in halls all over the kingdom and hummed by thousands; they were full of passion and soul-stirring music.

The words were not hers; sometimes they were taken from a poem by an old or a new writer, and not especially written for her, at others they were anonymous, and sometimes they were penned expressly.

Everyone wanted to know who she was, but her identity remained a mystery; the critics made conjectures as to the personality of this gifted composer, but none guessed that she was spending her days in solitude, hundreds of miles away, in an Italian village.

"I say, Annerly, you can do me a service and give yourself a little pleasure at the same time!" said Dick Brandon. "I've promised my sister that I would take her to the Harmonic Hall this evening, to hear Madame Sefton sing a new song by that clever composer who is taking the musical world by storm, and I can't go. Mary wants someone to take her, and you're the only man I care to ask to act as my substitute. What do you say?"

Stephen Annerly laughed good-naturedly.

"It's against my principles, you know, to act as cavalier, Dick!" he responded. "I'm a sworn bachelor, and you're placing me in danger!"

"I don't think so," observed Dick drily. "I think that you and sis are about the most unlikely persons to fall in love with one another, although I believe you would make a good match, 'pon my word! But sis is anxious not to lose this treat, so I hope you won't disappoint me!"

"I shall be delighted to accompany Miss Brandon to the Harmonic," said Annerly, with a profound bow. "Joking apart, though, I rather like the idea. That woman who composes the music for those songs and other pieces is wonderful. A woman composer is an exception, anyhow, but this one is doubly so. You may count on me, my friend, so hand over the tickets and don't go away with them in your pocket, leaving us in the lurch!"

"Just what I should have done if you hadn't reminded me!" cried Dick. "Here you are, and I'll tell sis that you'll call for her in a cab——"

"In a brougham, please! I never do things by halves!"

Punctually at the appointed time Stephen Annerly was waiting for Miss Brandon. She also was punctual, and they were at the Harmonic Hall in good time. They had excellent seats, and Stephen Annerly made up his mind that he was about to enjoy himself.

The first items on the programme were executed, and then came Madame Sefton, a magnificent singer.

She warbled the notes in entrancing style, and held her audience spellbound.

She sang two songs by the new lady composer; the first was one that had been heard before, while the other was entirely new to the lovers of songs and the frequenters of the concert halls. Stephen waited in eager expectation for this new song.

The first verse set him thinking, but the second made him sit bolt upright and stare vacantly in the direction of the singer, although not at her. The words were familiar to him; they recalled the old village and Ethelwyn Macey tripping over the meadow.

He forgot the charming girl by his side, he forgot the personality of the singer, he knew nothing of the audience. He was far away, yet listening with intense emotion to every word that was sung.

He knew those lines! His blood tingled. That was a poem of love which he had written and sent to his former playmate!

It seemed to him that the girl who had never given the least sign that she returned the affection which he had lavished upon her, was now answering him, telling him by means of beautiful music, and through the medium of his own poetic declaration, that she loved him.

There was a forcible beating of his heart, and a throbbing in his ears; he wanted to rush out when the singer had finished, and hasten back to the old place in the hope of still seeing her trip across the meadow, of catching her in his arms and asking her why she had not told him all this long ago!

He stifled a groan as memory came back and told him that the meadow was gone, and that Ethelwyn was there no longer. He sat out the rest of the programme, but he knew nothing of what passed, and Miss Brandon confidentially informed her brother on the following day that she had rarely seen an educated man so dull as Stephen Annerly had been at the concert.

"Perhaps he wasn't well?" suggested Dick. "I'll go and see! I have to formally thank him for taking you, of course, so I must go to his office."

Mr. Annerly had gone out of town, the manager told him. Yes, it was rather a sudden departure, but Mr. Annerly said he had received an urgent summons to the town where he was born, and must be off without delay. No, he hadn't explained the nature of the summons, so the manager could not say whether Mr. Annerly had lost a near relation quite suddenly.

Stephen Annerly was the only person who knew exactly why Stephen Annerly had left town so unexpectedly. He wanted to find one of Ethelwyn's relations, in order to make inquiries concerning her present whereabouts. He found the old lady in his and Ethelwyn's native place, and he plied her with questions.

"Bless me!" ejaculated the old lady. "You want my grandniece's address? Ah, to be sure, I mind you now! It's young Stephen! My eyes are not so sharp as they used to be, and you've grown out of knowledge! Yes, yes! You were always good friends!

"And so you want to find her? Well, I heard from her only last week; she sent me a pretty card from Italy, but she said she was coming back to England, and her address would be at Bournemouth."

She fetched the card, but it was useless. He must go to Bournemouth and seek her there.

He returned to the Metropolis without delay, and then caught the next train to Bournemouth. It was late at night when he arrived, but he was happy to be in the same place as Ethelwyn. He went to bed in a comfortable room in the best hotel, but he slept very little, and was up betimes and out, seeking for the shy maiden who had inspired him with such poetic feeling.

He was unlucky. For three days he walked about without catching the slightest glimpse of anyone who even remotely resembled Ethelwyn; she would be changed in figure, that was certain, and he was alive to that fact.

It was a lovely evening on the fourth day. Stephen Annerly, tired of his quest, approached a lonely portion of the beach on his return to the hotel. Seated on a piece of rock he saw a woman, at the mere sight of whom he stopped and pressed his hand to his heart to quiet its tumultuous throbbing.

He could not well distinguish the features, but he knew that it was Ethelwyn, and that his search was rewarded at last.

Recovering his self-possession by an effort, he drew near to her and cried: "Ethelwyn!"

She had not heard his approach, so deep were her meditations. At the sound of that name she awoke from her day-dreaming with a start, and glanced quickly up at the newcomer.

"It's Ste—Mr. Annerly!" she cried, rising and holding out her hand with a glad smile, which testified to the pleasure afforded to her by this unexpected meeting.

As she took the proffered hand, however, she seemed to recollect, and the old, shy, shrinking manner returned.

"Why not let it be 'Stephen,' as in the old schooldays?" he asked gently. He was mystified by the rapid change in her look. "Let us sit here and talk of those days and of the later ones."

"I thought you had forgotten me," she said, keeping her eyes averted. She did not call him by his Christian name, but he was glad to see that she did not use the formal "Mr. Annerley."

"Forgotten you?" he cried. "How could I? I have kept the vision of Ethelwyn Macey in my memory ever since, but I was sad because I believed that *you* had forgotten *me!*"

"You have remembered me all these years!" she said softly. "Yet you—I have never heard of you. What has made you come now?"

"A song! A new song by a celebrated lady composer! I went to hear it and the words aroused all the slumbering passion in my heart, for they were the words I had written to a girl long before!

"I thought that she had never cared for the poems, never cared for the writer, for she had given him none of the signs for which he was waiting so eagerly! When I heard those words sung with lovely music I said to myself that the girl did care after all.

"I told myself that I must find her, and ask her if my conjecture were correct or false! I sought tidings of her in the dear village where love sprang into existence for me, and I sought my love here. I have tramped here and there for four days in search of the composer who set my words to music, but I have only just found her!"

"I am residing inland," she explained, "and under my own name, not under that adopted for compositions; that is why you did not find me."

She was gazing at the sea. What a beautiful woman she had become! She did not reply to his revelation of love for her, but she did not shrink from him.

"Ethelwyn, why did you not tell me that the verses pleased you?"

"People said that you were mad on writing poetry, so I believed that you wrote just as the mood seized you, and that you would write the same to anyone else. I could not guess that they were written for me especially."

"They were written for you, because you were the only creature who inspired me with poetry! No other woman has ever awakened within me the poetic passion which—I realise better now than ever—which runs through those verses addressed to you. Ethelwyn, why did you set those words to music, after so long? Was it merely because the words were suitable for the purpose?"

She did not answer, and he continued, with subdued passion.

"Was it because you had treasured those lines through all the years of separation, and were at last compelled by your own love to set them to the responsive music that was vibrating in your own soul? Was it because you have loved me, as I have loved you, in secret all this long time?"

He had taken her hands and drawn her nearer, so that he could gaze into those expressive eyes, which had drooped under the searching glance.

"It is not fair to me to make me speak!" she protested meekly, with burning cheeks. "Can you not guess, and so spare me? It is the woman's part to listen, not to answer questions!"

"Except one!" he cried, with a ring of joy in his voice. He folded her in his arms, careless of being noticed by anyone who chanced to be near. He lifted the drooping face till she was forced to look straight into his eyes. Then he asked her the old, old question, and she answered, "Yes, Stephen!"

E. Powles.

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GREAT NEW SERIES. YOU CAN BEGIN HERE.

Confessions of a Self-made Girl

The writer of these Confessions relates in this series of articles the true story of her life, from the time when she left Cornwall, an unsophisticated but ambitious girl, until she made her name and fortune. Her name is well known to you.

[*For the purposes of these Confessions I am calling myself Maud Cardew, as my real name is too well known for me to wish to make the story of my life public in this manner.*]

MY HEART'S DESIRE.

I AM a native of a seaside village in Cornwall. As I grew up I began to tire of the monotony of the life and determined to go out into the world and make a name for myself.

One day when I was in the ruins of the Old Keep, which is on the cliffs, meditating upon what I should do were I free to carve out my own destiny, two strangers appeared—evidently tourists, I thought. They told me they had decided to stay in the neighbourhood for a few days, and asked if I knew of any lodgings. I said that my father would be glad to put them up at the farm, and accordingly they came home with me.

Their names were the Honourable Robert Lestrange (commonly called Bobbie) and Di Northcote.

I told these two Londoners of my desire to see the world. Bobbie encouraged me in my ambitions, but Di advised me to stay at home. This, however, was not at all in my line, as I told him, and when he saw that nothing would shake me from my resolve, he promised to try to find something for me to do when I arrived in the great city.

Bobbie met me on my arrival in London. Owing to a fog we got separated, and as I stood on the steps of a house I heard a man's voice asking me to come inside and wait until the fog cleared. Feeling that it would be hopeless to find Bobbie, I accepted the invitation. I remained there some time when Di happened to call, and he took me to my lodgings in Bloomsbury, where Bobbie was waiting; he told me that the man in whose rooms I had been was Lord Cecil Trevor, one of the worst "men about town."

Di came in next morning to tell me he had found me a place as trier-on in the firm of Philips and Philips, mantle and jacket makers. He also gave me some advice which I rather resented. I didn't like my work at all, and as I felt I ought not to live alone I got Lizzie Brown, a new girl, to share rooms with me.

I met Lord Cecil Trevor on several occasions, and Di and I fell out because of my friendship with him. I accepted an engagement for a small part on the stage at the suggestion of Lord Cecil. He was just leaving my rooms one evening when Di appeared at the door. They saw each other though they did not meet, and I wondered what Di would do about it.

An Encounter in a Restaurant.

FOR just two months Di did nothing.

Apparently he completely ignored my existence, and left me to go my own sweet way, though afterwards I found this was far from being the case.

Not that that way was sweet by any means, quite the contrary. What I endured during my first few weeks on the stage I shall never forget.

Fortunately for me the manager was always fairly polite on Lord Cecil's account, but he was most insulting to many of the girls, and I do not know how they ever put up with it.

My dear reader, if you are dying to go on the stage, and look upon it as a life of bliss; before you take the initial step picture to yourself the possibilities of vulgar, even dirty, companions, with whom you will probably share a dressing-room; the wearing of half-soiled dresses, whose previous wearers may have left a good deal to be desired; much familiarity from young men who ought to know better; possible insults from the manager which you dare not resent if you want to keep your post, and very likely existence in cheap and nasty lodgings indefinitely.

The picture you no doubt see of beautiful clothes, heaps of money and admirers, costly gifts, and a speedy ascent to fame, *remember*, is only for the *few*.

For one that succeeds, how many are there who fail—nay, worse—who sink out of the reach of all self-respect for ever? I am afraid to say.

I am not saying that the stage is all evil; I know there are admirable men and women in the profession, but I do say unless a girl has "the strength of ten" to keep her heart pure and her aims high, let her take any lowly walk in life and any salary offered, sooner than risk all for the precarious chance of doing well on the stage.

I certainly did not have to go through the worst, but my experiences were quite bad enough, and again and again I meditated throwing it up.

Had I not resigned my post at Philips and Philips, and estranged my best friend, I no doubt should have done. As it was I dare not.

I was too proud to go to Di and ask him to help me. Bobbie was travelling abroad, and I had no one to go to but Cecil Trevor.

If I had chosen to lift my little finger he would have given me half his income, but that was one of the temptations my natural strength of mind saved me from.

I realised that to accept anything further from him would

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be a step downward I might never be able to retrieve, and one which might lead to irreparable results.

I did not then know any definite harm of him, beyond what Di Northcote had implied, but the latter had not spoken altogether in vain, and I kept continually on the defensive whenever I saw him, which was fairly often.

Certainly in a way he was good to me, for he took me out to dinner many a time when I was actually in need of food; and after discovering by accident that I could not afford a good fire, he ordered in coal regularly, without saying anything about it.

At the same time he did all in his power to make himself necessary to me, and to get me so involved with him that I could not free myself.

When I think of all the subtle, unsuspected designs with which a clever man tries to entrap a girl who is friendless and alone, I shudder at the thought of my own risk.

It ended in his proposing marriage, though I am bound to confess I do not think he had the least intention of carrying out his suggestion at the time. It was merely the last stone left unturned, and it is quite likely he would have deceived me somehow.

As it was, I began by refusing to listen, and growing angry, but he merely waited a little, and watched his opportunity to return to the attack. In choosing his time he showed diabolical insight. Never once, I think, did I know him to speak out of season.

One of the worst attacks of all came when I was laid up with influenza. A girl, who was in the same company, and who was good to me in a way of her own, came round to see if she could do anything.

She found me sobbing helplessly from weakness, and loneliness, and misery. No one had come near me since Lizzie went out except the landlady, who had brought up some beef-tea scarcely fit to drink, and got me some quinine, then left me to my own devices.

I felt too ill to read, so lay picturing the waves and the cliffs at home, until I did not know how to bear it.

Then Jessie Ward came.

Poor Jessie! I must always feel grateful to her, although she was such a rough diamond, and ended in being one of those who go under.

She set to work at once to make my bed and wash my face and hands, then she went out to buy some beef jelly with her own money.

"Where's that fine young spark of yours all this time?" she asked, when I had eaten and recovered a little. "Why isn't he looking after you now? It's what he ought to be doing."

"Oh, no!" I said. "I shouldn't like it at all. I wouldn't have him near."

She grinned at that and shook her head knowingly, then remarked laconically, "Rats!"

"He is nothing to me," I reiterated wearily. "Please go away now, I want to try to get to sleep; but I hope you'll come again if you've nothing better to do. I shall get up to-morrow morning."

She promised readily and went off. When she next returned she did not come alone.

"I'm glad to find you up," she said. "I've brought someone to see you," and she looked very pleased with herself. "I thought it would do you good," and she beckoned Lord Cecil into the room, shortly after retiring herself.

I felt very angry, but felt too weak to expostulate, and I must admit he was very kind. He had brought me beautiful fruit and flowers, and jelly, all bought on the way, after Jessie had succeeded in finding him and telling him of my illness.

"I was just going to join a party at Prince's," he said, "when Miss Ward came to tell me about you. I don't know how she ever discovered my address, but I just jumped into a hansom and came.

"You mustn't be angry, Maud, I only want to take care of you while you're down; and it must be awful to sit here alone," and he too glanced expressively round my dingy little sitting-room.

"Do let me take you away," he urged, "just until you are better. I'll find a nice room and a nice nurse, and then you'll be taken care of properly."

I smiled faintly, for it was undoubtedly very pleasant to be taken care of, but I refused to be moved.

"I shall be all right to-morrow or the next day," I said, "it is only this wretched cold I have caught somehow."

After he had gone again I sat thinking about him for a long time, and about the future.

What was I to do?

I hated my present existence, and began to feel it was a vain hope to think of success. I wondered whether I would write to Bobbie, and half decided to do so, but my stupid pride again stepped in and prevented me.

I had chosen my own way, and would not weakly cry out because it was a failure. If I hung on a little longer things would probably improve, and then I should be so glad I had not spoken.

As for Di, I imagined he had given me up altogether, and would never speak to me again. I felt vexed with him, although I knew I had given him good cause, and indulged in a pleasing picture of myself at the top of the profession, scornfully ignoring his attempts at a reconciliation.

But when the night came and I lay in a sleepless fever, trying in vain to rest, all my bravado forsook me, and I broke down again into helpless weeping. Finally I decided to ask Cecil Trevor to send me back to my home the next day.

But when he came he would not hear of it. Again he had brought me exquisite flowers and fruit, and while he arranged them on a little table near the couch he spoke encouragingly of all I was to achieve by-and-bye.

"Only you can't go on alone, Maud," he said, changing his voice to lover's tones. "You must come to me and let me take care of you always."

"No, no," I breathed. "It would be madness. By-and-bye you would weary of me, and then I believe you are the kind of man to desert one."

"Never," he urged. "You are cruel to say a thing like that. I have never changed to you for one second since I first met you."

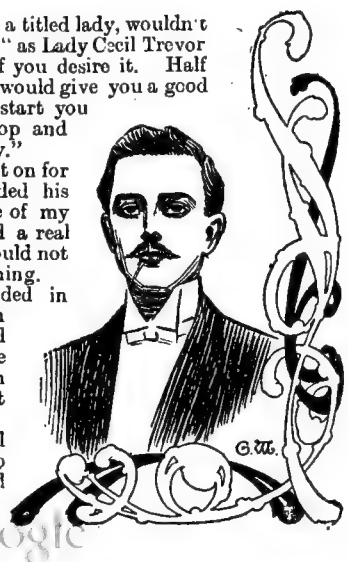
"Not to me, perhaps, but what of other women?"

He walked down the room and came back and stood beside me.

"Look here, Maud," he said, "you're so clear-sighted I don't suppose I could blind you if I tried, and I don't know that I want to. I suppose I have been a rake in my time, but if you'll marry me I'll turn over a new leaf and begin again. I never cared for anyone in my life as I do for you; you can do what you like with me."

He pressed nearer.

"You would like to be a titled lady, wouldn't you, Maud?" he urged; "as Lady Cecil Trevor success is at your feet if you desire it. Half the managers in London would give you a good part, and with such a start you would soon run to the top and have it all you own way."



In this manner he went on for some time, and he pleaded his cause well. But in spite of my antagonism to Di, I had a real respect for him, and I would not let myself forget his warning.

All Lord Cecil succeeded in wringing from me then was a half hearted promise to think the matter over, and with that he had to be content for the present.

I got well quickly, and prepared to go back to the theatre, but at Lord Cecil's request the manager gave me a

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week's holiday to completely recover.

During that week he insisted upon taking me out every day, and one afternoon he arrived in a beautiful little motor to take me into the country. I was delighted, and we started off at once, heading for the north, with the idea of going round by Bushey and Stanmore.

It was a part of the country I had not seen, and it pleased me exceedingly. Lord Cecil was in a gay, entertaining mood, and, for a wonder, refrained from worrying me with his usual plea.

I have never been able to discover if the ending of that day were a planned affair or not, but certainly it savoured of being so.

The evenings were not very long yet, and it began to grow dusk some time before we were near London. Lord Cecil lit the lamps, and remarking carelessly that we should be rather late home, resumed his driving.

At about 9.30, when it was pitch dark and commencing to rain, something went wrong with the motor. At first my companion assured me it was all right, but presently he began to appear anxious. Several times we stopped for him to try to remedy matters, but at last he gave it up, and confessed he could do nothing.

"Then we must catch a train," I said at once, rather relieved than otherwise to have escaped the long, cold drive home.

"There is no train anywhere near here," he answered.

"But there must be," I exclaimed, with something like a gasp.

"Unfortunately the railroad builders did not think so," he said lightly. "The nearest station is about four miles distant, and there would scarcely be likely to be a train."

"Then we must hire a trap and drive home," I said firmly.

"Drive twenty miles to-night?" he asked. "Why, it will be raining cats and dogs directly."

"But what else can we do?" I urged.

"We must go to a hotel for the night," he said, calmly.

"It is quite impossible," I asserted indignantly, "I should not dream of such a thing."

"But you have no choice," and he could not quite conceal the latent triumph in his voice. "It is absolutely the only thing possible."

"I can go to a cottage," I said, "and you can go to the hotel."

"What difference would that make beyond being far less comfortable for you? You would probably get your clothes stolen or something, to say nothing of possible smallpox."

That last settled me, for I had an intense horror of any infection, and would have risked a good deal before possible contact with it. Accordingly we went together to the village inn, and ordered rooms and a hot supper.

While they were preparing Lord Trevor returned with someone to the motor, and they succeeded in getting it as far as the inn yard. Then he joined me in the little old-fashioned sitting-room where our supper was laid for us.

I was in an icy mood, and scarcely spoke to him the whole meal, and directly we had finished I announced my intention of going to bed and turned to the door, without offering to say "Good night."

"Wait a minute," he said. "It is very early yet. You are not angry with me about this, are you?"

I bit my lip a moment.

"I think you have managed very badly," I said frigidly.

"But I couldn't help it," he urged, "on my oath I couldn't, Maud. It is just Fate that is throwing us together."

He had got hold of my hand, and I tried to draw it away.

"No, don't," he said; "it is no use fighting against Fate. If ever two people were meant for each other it is you and I."

I broke away, but he stood against the door and would not let me pass. He grew wild, and reviled his fate, and me, and everything else. He said much that I cannot remember, but I have great cause to be thankful to the good Providence that gave me a strong and fearless heart for any time of stress.

He tried to frighten me with the consequences of our being thus waylaid together, and I knew that it was a very serious business, but I held my ground firmly in spite of him.

Finally, knowing I was not to be conquered, he opened the door for me, but as I passed out he snatched my hand and kissed it passionately.

I drew it away hastily and fled; but when I had carefully locked my door I threw myself on the bed and burst into tears, completely overcome.

Two days later he came to me with the news that the story was out. As a matter of fact, I knew it, for I had returned to the theatre the evening before, and the jokes fired at me and at my expense left me no room for doubt.

All the evening my face had burnt with shame and indignation, and when at last I got home I had cried myself to sleep.

At first when he came I was so angry with him I hardly knew what I said; but when my anger had spent itself he returned to the charge with fourfold energy.

He pointed out how I was now involved; how nothing I could do or say could alter anything; and what an untenable position I held.

I was very tired and very miserable, and I let him talk. I had got into that fatal mood when nothing seems to matter, and the more he talked the stronger hold it gained upon me.

I believed my reputation was ruined, that I was a dead failure, and that the sooner I was out of it all the better. Meanwhile it seemed that I might as well marry him as not, since nothing mattered; and anyhow it would be better than going on as we were.

He saw the signs of relenting, and drove in his keen-edged barbs with faultless dexterity, dwelling upon just those points he knew most likely to affect me.

In the end I gave way.

"It doesn't matter," I said wearily. "I know I am a dead failure, and if I went back home I could never feel the same again. I will marry you as soon as you like."

After that he was exceedingly good to me, and I grew more hopeful again. He would not let me go back to the theatre, but promised I should take a part as soon as we were married if I still wished it, and meanwhile he insisted on taking good rooms for Lizzie and myself.

I used to wonder sometimes what Bobbie and Di would say, but on the whole I thought very little, just enjoying the sudden release from the miseries of the last two months.

As a matter of fact, Di was out of town just then, as well as Bobbie, having been called away to a young cousin who was taken dangerously ill in France and had no other relative. He has told me since how he hated going while I was on such friendly terms with Lord Cecil, but was unable to help himself.

Meanwhile the day for our marriage drew near. It was to take place very early, and immediately afterwards we were going away for two months.

Again and again during the last week I had anxious qualms, and once I even went so far as to consider writing to Di at the address he had given me. But my pride still ruled me, and what I had undertaken I said I would go through with.

It was about two evenings before the date fixed that I went with Cecil Trevor to one of the quiet restaurants we usually chose for dinner.

I remember there were more people present than usual that evening, and I could not help feeling a sense of discomfort at the evident interest bestowed upon us.

I did not feel somehow that it was my appearance, or the fact that we were a striking-looking pair, but I had an uncomfortable sensation of something quite out of the ordinary. So it proved a little later on.

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We had just got to the sweets when a tall, handsome, gipsy-faced woman walked leisurely into the room, and sat down a little behind Lord Cecil, where she could have a full view of me without being seen by him.

For quite ten minutes I do not think she took her eyes off me, and at last, in desperation, I drew Lord Cecil's attention to her. He turned round, and instantly, before he could collect himself, gave a muttered exclamation, and grew ashy white.

The girl did not stir, but she looked at him with a bold, supercilious stare and an ugly expression on her mouth. It was impossible not to see that there was something between them, and they were not strangers. However, Lord Cecil turned back to the table and took up his fork again, with an attempt to appear perfectly at ease.

"She seems to know you," I said, not willing to let the incident pass.

"Yes," he answered at once, "but she is a perfect stranger to me. She either mistakes me for someone else or is mad. If she continues to annoy you I will ask the manager to have her removed."

I was silent a few moments, then looked in her direction again. She was still gazing at me, but now her eyes were less hard, and much of the scorn in them had given place to a certain degree of interest. At last she got up and came to our table.

"So you're here, my fine fellow, are you!" she said in a low, clear voice. "I've run you to earth at last."

Immediately many eyes were upon us, and I felt myself turning scarlet with mortification. Lord Cecil, however, kept his face well. He looked up at her coolly and remarked:

"You must be mad, woman; or you have mistaken me for someone else."

"A pretty tale!" she retorted. "Certainly if you are not Lord Cecil Trevor I have mistaken you for someone else."

He blanched then, but held his ground.

"Yes," he said, "I am Lord Cecil Trevor, so I can only conclude you are mad."

"Waiter," he added; "I think you had better call in a policeman, for this woman is either drunk or insane."

The waiter took her by the arm and attempted to lead her away; but she was a majestic being, and waved him off as if he had been a child.

"No," she said; "I am neither drunk nor mad. I came here to find Cecil Trevor, and having found him I have got something to say to him." And she seated herself at our table.

Cecil Trevor got up then, and turned to the head waiter angrily.

"Will you remove this woman," he said peremptorily; "or am I to leave your restaurant because you do not know how to protect a lady from insult? Are you all cowards here?"

The head waiter fussed and fumed as foreigners do when in a quandary, but still something about the strange woman seemed to quell them all and compel attention.

"Listen to me, Cecil Trevor," she said; "I will not keep you long. When I last saw you, I told you I would frustrate every fresh scheme of villainy on your part I had any power to, as long as I lived.

"Last week I heard you were going to be married, and the one who told me spoke well of the girl. That is why I am here. Had she been one of the bad ones I would have left you in peace, but I have sworn an oath to myself that you shall never harm an innocent girl if I can help it."

While she spoke this in clear, rich tones, Lord Cecil grew yet more deathly white, and fidgeted uneasily, in spite of his frantic efforts to appear unconcerned.

"The poor thing is quite mad," he said; "if you like we will retire while they call a policeman." And he got up.

"No, don't go," she said to me, and something in her voice made me sit still.

"I have been watching you purposely, because I wanted to see what kind of girl you were. I like you, so I will save you. You can't marry Lord Cecil. He is a married man."

(I will tell this woman's strange story and its result next Tuesday.)

BETRAYED BY THE RONTGEN RAYS.

Telling of the Shattering of a Love Affair.

Ponpon Mortgage, the renowned financier, sat in his sumptuously-furnished library in his Park Lane mansion thinking bitter, hard thoughts. Deep lines furrowed his brow, and his fingers twitched nervously as he turned a letter over and over in his hands, and read again the lines therein.

"Never have I tried to thwart my daughter's slightest wish," he said at last; "but this thing is too serious. Upon it depends her whole future happiness. This letter from Reggy Ordinaire tells me that he loves her, and that she returns his affection. Hah! is it so? Then I must, and shall, cure her of this absurd passion. Thompson!"

A footman entered the room and bowed to the great financier.

"Go to this address and tell the Professor to call at my house to-night at eight o'clock and bring a Rumkorff coil and a Crooke's tube with him."

The footman bowed again and left the room.

"Once more will I save my fortunes by the use of the cathode rays," muttered the banker. "Hah! Reggy Ordinaire, I doubt me if you can stand that test!"

* * * * *

Reggy Ordinaire and Mildred Mortgage sat in the yellow drawing-room of the financier's palatial mansion. Reggy was in faultless evening dress and Mildred wore a wonderful gown of some filmy material of a lovely soft colour.

Suddenly the lights went out and the subtle cathode rays from a Crooke's tube were directed full on Reggy. Neither he nor Mildred noticed it, because they were too deeply engaged in the sweet dreams of perfect love.

* * * * *

"Mildred, darling, hear me. I swear to you that——"

"Stop!" The beautiful girl raised her arm with an imperious gesture.

"Stop, Reginald Tabbledote Ordinaire! It is useless for you to attempt to deny the evidence of a Röntgen process cathode photograph. See for yourself!" and the proud girl held out a large photograph.

Reggy looked at it and then turned as white as he conveniently could.

There in the horrible cathode picture was his face and form in evening dress, but standing out with startling clearness were the pictures of three of his other girls which he had in an inside pocket—five love letters written by Mildred's rival, sixpence-halfpenny in coin in his vest pocket, nine pawn tickets, and a dunning letter for his room rent.

He also noticed with horror that the outlines of his dickey, or false shirt-front, were standing out with cruel distinctness in the photograph.

"I could have, perhaps, forgiven the rest," cried Mildred with a proud toss of her shapely head, "but the dickey—never!"

And Reginald Tabbledote Ordinaire darted into the cheerless night—a broken man.

A. H. W.

ON PAGES 421 AND 431 YOU WILL FIND SOMETHING TO INTEREST YOU VERY MUCH. TURN TO THEM NOW.

CAUGHT IN THE ACT;

or, Sinning through Love.

"And this is the old study, eh? I remember carrying your little daughter across the lawn the last time I was here. She was about six then, so that fact tells us how many years it is since we met, Dick!"

Mr. John Penton, just home after a residence of several years in the East, in which part of the world he had served his country in the Consular Service, laughed softly at the recollection. It would have sounded strange to others to have heard the stern old solicitor called "Dick," but Mr. Penton had not forgotten the college days and he had not grown so hard as Richard Mortimer.

"Quite a woman now, eh?" pursued Penton suavely. "Yes, you had her baby portrait up there—it's gone! How is she, Dick? You haven't mentioned her for two years or so, if my memory serves me well. I believe I asked you about her some months ago, but you didn't reply."

"I have no daughter; she is gone!" answered Mortimer harshly.

The tone in which the words were uttered told Penton more than five minutes' explanation would have done. Instinctively he grasped the situation; Joyce Mortimer had disobeyed her father and had been thrust out from his life. He was just the kind of man who would steel his heart against all affection and ruthlessly drive away the son or the daughter who dared to cross his desires in any important matter.

"These are some first-rate 'first editions,' John," said Mortimer in a matter-of-fact tone, devoid of emotion. "You know that I was always a keen collector of old books."

He motioned to one partition of his book-case, but Penton, although he pretended to show great interest in the books, was thinking of Joyce Mortimer. She would be about twenty-four, so it was likely enough that the separation had been caused by a love affair.

"I am open to bet that Joyce fell in love with a man who didn't suit her father," thought Penton. "She has just enough of her father's character to make her refuse to give him up, and—well, that settles it! I wonder how it has turned out? I must make it my business to find out!"

John Penton's visit—it was rather a call than a visit—was not so pleasant as he had anticipated, and it was with something very much like a sentiment of relief that he took leave of Richard Mortimer at nine o'clock in the evening. Some intangible restraint was upon both men; the conversation did not flow easily; the thoughts of both wandered towards the daughter, and Richard Mortimer found it impossible to shut her out as completely as he contrived to do on other occasions.

Perhaps it was the mysterious force of magnetism that was working upon him, for Joyce was thinking of him—thinking deeply of him as she sat in the small room, scantily furnished, and waited for her husband to return. How greatly things had changed in less than three years! She had fallen in love with Clifford Hatton; her father had disapproved of her choice, because he wished her to marry the son of a great judge. Joyce had argued and pleaded with her father, but the old man was obdurate, and demanded implicit obedience. He was incapable of comprehending so great a love as that of Joyce for the man of her selection; he could regard her refusal to do as he desired simply in the light of gross disobedience, and he told her that she must yield or leave his roof. He was almost overwhelmed when she chose the latter course, but he did not relent and he had not heard from her since that day.

Joyce had married Clifford and the first few months of married life had been very happy. Clifford had a small income from investments left to him by his father, and he was a rising star in the operatic world—he would be a second Sims Reeves, said the critics. The young tenor—he was nearly thirty—and his lovable wife bade fair to become the pets of Society when Cliff was taken ill with the influenza, and when he recovered his voice was gone.

From that time their troubles seemed to come thick and fast. The investments upon which they were relying till Cliff could find another profession or till his voice should come back, failed utterly, and they found themselves in very straitened circumstances.

Their great love for each other buoyed them up, and they faced the sudden change of fortune with calmness; the baby, too, drew them closer together, although its advent increased their monetary troubles.

"I shall get some occupation, some appointment, soon, and all will go well again, dearest Joyce!" declared Cliff cheerfully.

And Joyce smiled and whispered words of encouragement.

Fate, however, was not kind to them, and the strength of their love was tested to the utmost. Occupation did not come as Cliff expected; try as he might, he could get no appointment, for he had received no training that fitted him for any other sphere in life. He was glad to accept work in almost any capacity, but he obtained no regular employment, and the home was gradually sold, till they were reduced to three small rooms in a middle-class locality.

Joyce never complained, although her love for her husband must have been severely tested when she recalled the luxury she had given up for him. At times, Cliff referred to the fact in remorseful tones, but she always stopped him.

"It is every bit as hard for you, Cliff," she would say energetically. "Your lot in life has changed, and you would be better off if you only had yourself to think about. I have nothing to regret!"

"I should not have been better off, Joyce dear," he would return, "for I should not be the possessor of your love!"

The crisis came one day when Joyce suggested that she might be able to get a situation in an office as a lady clerk.

"I have done some work for my father, you know, Cliff, and I understand a good deal of the work of a solicitor's office. Lady clerks seem to have a better chance than men, and I shall probably get a post. At any rate, it is worth trying. I know you have tried the same thing, dear, but have not had a chance. You see, you know nothing of the work, whereas I have acquired quite the correct style of hand-writing and really know a great deal. Our joint attempts to get music pupils are not successful. Yes, yes!" she added gently, as he pronounced against the idea. "You must let me try!"

"Wait a little longer, Joyce, and I shall get something, I feel sure of it!" he protested.

There was such a pained expression on his face that she gave way. She recognised how bitter it would be for him to see her go out to work, while he—who ought to be the bread-winner—was forced to be idle. She yielded in order to give him time to become accustomed to the painful thought, but she was determined to carry out the idea if their prospects did not improve.

Cliff's face was white when he left her, and there was a strained look on it; the pallor seemed to grow in intensity as the next day or two passed and the strained appearance

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of his usually handsome face was more noticeable than at first.

Joyce's heart seemed to be pierced with anguish as she observed this change in him; she knew that it was on her account; his love for her caused him agony whenever he thought of the position to which they were reduced, and she began to fear that the mental suffering would bring about some illness. She always presented a cheerful exterior when he was in, and tried to make him happy by playing with the baby and in many little ways.

He began to sit up at night, "to practise writing and learn something of book-keeping," he told her with a sad smile. He would creep into bed after midnight and sleep uneasily, starting violently now and then. One morning, a fortnight after he had begun this practice, he arose in a very agitated condition.

"What is it, Cliff?" asked Joyce anxiously. "You are upset and I am afraid you will be ill."

Cliff laughed mirthlessly.

"The office work is affecting my nerves," he said evasively. "I mean the study of handwriting and book-keeping. I have good hopes that I shall get something to-day, Joyce! I cannot tell you more now, but we shall see. I hope that this misery will soon be over!"

He returned in the afternoon, looking happier, yet with an uneasiness evident in his face and eyes.

"I have some money, Joyce!" he cried, drawing out ten sovereigns. "And that is only the beginning of the better times, I hope."

"Oh, Cliff!" she gasped. She was so thankful, and now that the long strain appeared to be over, she sank down into a chair and sobbed. "It is so—I mean, I am so thankful, Cliff, for your sake and the baby's."

"I am glad, for your sweet sake, Joyce! It has cut me to the heart, to watch you drooping. I could scarcely bear it, dear! It was driving me mad!"

He spoke earnestly, so very gravely, that she sobbed the more. It was not like the light-hearted Cliff of old.

"How was it, Cliff? How did you get the money? Have you got a situation, and this is an advance of salary?"

There was a pause; Cliff did not answer at once; something seemed to be choking him.

"I have done a desperate thing!" he said at length. "But desperate diseases require desperate remedies! I speculated on the Stock Exchange. I bought under 'cover.' You do not know what that means, dear. I can buy a few shares by paying only a couple of pounds, and I got that advance from someone. I was lucky; almost as soon as I bought, a rumour sent the shares up in value and I sold! I can go on doing that now; some call it gambling," he added hastily, as he saw the look in her uplifted eyes, "but business is just as much a gamble. It is fair, and I shall have my losses as well as my gains, but in the end I shall win, if I watch the markets."

"I don't like it, Cliff!" she began, but he stopped her.

"I will still try to get other employment, and in the rush of business on 'Change I may succeed there and get into an office, but we must live in the meantime!"

Cliff went out regularly every morning after that, and he brought home a small salary at the close of each week. It was just enough to keep them going in the modest style to which they had been reduced, but that was sufficient. Joyce was relieved of the necessity of finding a situation, at which Cliff expressed himself as delighted; while Joyce herself began to assume a happier look.

"If my husband goes, I go with him," cried Joyce, going to the side of the shrinking man.

At the end of the first fortnight, however, Joyce spoke to her husband seriously.

"You are not looking well, Cliff, dear! I have been hoping that the pallor and the anxious appearance would leave your face now that you have work and we can keep afloat. Oh, Cliff! Don't worry about me! I do not mind, so long as I have you and the baby. It grieves me to think that you are worrying about me. I would willingly give up all for your sake!"

"You are a good, brave woman, Joyce, and I will try to be more cheerful; but it *does*——"

She placed a delicate hand over his mouth, then withdrew it and kissed his lips. The subject was dropped, for Cliff could not endure the look of tender reproach in her eyes. He became more cheerful in manner, but Joyce was not deceived. Something was worrying him and she was not happy.

Nearly another month went by, and Cliff resumed his practice of sitting up late. Joyce said nothing on the first occasion, but on the second night she told him not to be long and retired to the bedroom where she sat down without attempting to undress. Cliff did not suspect that she had not gone straight to bed.

Joyce waited for nearly an hour, but Clifford had not moved, so far as she could judge. She was uneasy; an indefinable feeling of impending trouble took possession of her. It was not late, for Cliff had pressed her to retire early, as she was tired, and she had left him at the early hour of nine. The house was still; the occupants of the lower apartments were out for the night

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At length Joyce rose from her seat and moved quietly towards the door, an inner one, permitting the occupants to pass from one room to the other without going across the landing. The door was shut, but the handle turned quietly, and the door opened noiselessly.

She scarcely comprehended why she moved so silently; she wished to see what her husband was doing, yet she did not desire to disturb him. He must not work day and night to the injury of his health on her account!

He was bending over the table, writing; he was doing it very slowly and carefully. On the table, rather to the side, she could see a sheet of paper with scraps of writing on it. Poor Cliff! He was still practising the "office hand"! Yet she thought he had acquired a good style lately. She approached him on tip-toe, intending to bend over him from behind, see what he was writing, kiss him and remonstrate.

She reached the back of the chair and bent over the bowed form. Before him lay a cheque and Cliff was just finishing the signature, "Richard Mortimer." Her head seemed to swim; it was a cheque for five hundred pounds, payable to "self or bearer," and Cliff had written it, and was forging her father's name!

"Oh, Cliff, how could you?" she moaned in a low voice, grasping the back of the chair to save herself from falling.

She was pointing to the tell-tale slip of paper on the table, and the anguish indicated by her look was terrible to behold.

"Cliff," she asked huskily, "Cliff, did the other money come in that way?"

He bent his head, he could not answer; but the gesture was sufficient.

"Why, oh, why did you do it? Oh, my husband, my husband, I could have borne poverty!"

"I did it to save you and the child, Joyce! I could not endure to see you suffer! If I have sinned, it is my great love for you that made me sin! But have I committed any crime? The law may say so, but justice should say that I have not! Your father brought you up to luxury and gave you your own way; then, when you wanted your own way on the most important occasion in life, he would not let you have it, and he cast you off, leaving you to misfortune. He knows how you have suffered, so he has not the excuse of ignorance, for I humbled myself to him and told him—for your sake! He brought you up in luxury, I say, and it is his moral duty to support you in that state if you need it, and he can give it! You do need it and he *can* give it! If I have taken his money, to save you from want, it is but justice!"

"No! no! no!" cried Joyce vehemently. "It is not right; you are guilty of the crime of forgery, and the wrath of God and man will fall upon you and yours—upon us, whom you love and would save! Oh, what can I do to save *you?*"

A sharp knock on the outer door made them start. A voice called out sternly to open.

"The police!" cried Joyce in a whisper. "Quick, Cliff, you must fly! I will keep them out till you get away!"

The wife's love conquered all other sentiments now. She knew that a felon's doom awaited him, and her only thought was to save him from it.

"Quick!" she cried again, as the knock was repeated and the voice muttered a threat to break the door in. "Through there, to the back, and along the coping! You can drop to the roof of the low house at the end, and from there you ought to get clear!"

She snatched up the cheque and the sheet of paper on which were imitations of her father's signature, and thrust them into her pocket. She caught him by the arm in order to hurry him away, when the door gave way under a sudden push, and in walked Richard Mortimer, followed by John Penton.

The latter closed the door behind him, after whispering something to two men who remained outside.

"Father!" cried Joyce. "Father, spare him!"

Mortimer waved her aside imperiously.

"The police officers outside have a warrant for the arrest of that man on a charge of forging my name on a cheque for fifty pounds!" he cried. "They will take the good-for-nothing scoundrel and you will come back with me to the home which you should never have left! Penton, let them in. What on earth are you keeping them out for?"

"If my husband goes, I go with him!" cried Joyce, taking her place by the side of the shrinking man. "If he has done wrong, he has done it on my account, and as I have shared the gain, so will I share the penalty! I will never return to your house under such conditions!"

Penton stepped forward and placed a restraining arm on Mortimer.

"There is something wrong here, Dick!" he cried sternly. "You have given me to understand that your daughter's husband was a blackguard, but I see by the very look of the man that that was wrong. Your imperious temperament has led you to a gross injustice. Nay," he continued, as Mortimer interrupted, and his tone was judicial in its authority, "listen and let me get to the bottom of this!"

The commanding figure of John Penton seemed to overawe all, even the autocratic Mortimer. He bade them be seated while he himself stood and put clever leading questions. In three minutes he had the whole story.

"Dick," he said impressively, "a crime is a crime and cannot be overlooked, the law says, but there are crimes and crimes. There are some acts which the law cannot touch, although they be sins as great as any in the penal code. You owed a duty to your daughter and you have not fulfilled it! Her husband is right in what he says, so far. You deserve more punishment for your heard-hearted conduct than he does for his crime! And if I were a judge," he added hotly, "I'd give it to you—by George, I would!"

Mortimer cowered under the scathing words of his old college chum. Penton reflected for a few seconds, and then he spoke again.

"The guilty should always be punished, but the punishment should be in accordance with the circumstances under which the sin was committed. I can imagine that Hatton has suffered already—suffered in a manner that cannot be equalled by any sentence that might be passed upon him. Further, I consider that Richard Mortimer has something to suffer, for his sorry conduct towards his daughter. Don't plead for your father, my dear; it's no use! We must try to get Hatton off as lightly as we can, and if Mortimer looks foolish or suffers in other ways, in endeavouring to get out of the consequences of having a warrant issued, that's part of his punishment! I'll pay the fifty pounds, and we must say that some blunder has been committed, or that there has been a mistake! I expect you'll have to go with the police now, but I'll come and bail you out!"

Hatton clasped his weeping wife in his arms; then he imprinted a kiss on the brow of his still sleeping daughter, and left the room with Penton and the officers.

When they were gone, Mortimer raised his eyes to Joyce and held out his hands in mute appeal for forgiveness. Joyce sank on her knees in front of him, burying her face in her hands and weeping hysterically, yet with a strange feeling of joy. Was it all coming right?

The police superintendent would not take bail; but on the following morning, when Hatton was brought before the magistrate, Penton appeared and stated that a serious mistake had been made and that the prosecutor was too ill to attend. Ultimately the case was allowed to escape from public notice.

Joyce and Clifford retired to a large farm in the east of England, where they lived down the memory of those dark days. John Penton is an occasional visitor and is always made welcome. Mortimer was ashamed to meet them for a long time, but he finally overcame the feeling and paid them a visit. He goes there once a year for a holiday. Joyce is not likely to feel the need of money again, for Richard Mortimer has settled most of his estate on her.

They are happy, Joyce and her husband, but at times the shadow of the sin makes itself felt, for no sin can be completely obliterated. When Cliff is depressed, Joyce knows what is causing this sentiment, and she kisses him fondly as if to assure him that all is forgiven.

F. Brewster.

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THE FRESH AIR FUND.

What is the F.A.F.?

The Fresh Air Fund is an organisation which exists to, so far as may be, brighten the dull, joyless lives of the children in the slums of our great cities.

It has been described as "The Cheapest Charity," and this it is in two senses.

I.—The F.A.F. devotes the whole of the moneys subscribed to the purpose for which their donors intend them. There are no deductions for rent or salaries or postage, or the thousand and one expenses which make so big a hole in many other excellent charities. The whole of the expenses are paid by Messrs. C. Arthur Pearson Ltd., and by the Ragged School Union, which places its great organisation at the disposal of the Fund.

2.—There is no such charity in the case of which so little buys so much. Ninepence pays for a day's delight for a child. Eight pounds two shillings provides all that is necessary for the enjoyment of a complete party of 200 children, with the needful complement of attendants.

As a broad rule, threepence pays for a child's fare, and sixpence more buys it food enough for two good meals.

Every penny subscribed is spent on those two wonder-workers, food and fares. God's green country and the kindly help of willing friends do what else is needed to make a day's real happiness for a little prisoner of the great, gloomy city.

There are no distinctions of creed. Need and the improbability of any other holiday are the only qualifications.

Why was the F.A.F. Started?

Just because there seemed to be nothing more pitiful than to see little children in a steamy, smelly slum trying to make-believe that they were in the green fields, which are the natural and only proper summer playground for children.

Most of you haven't even seen this. If you had, there would be no need to ask you to subscribe to the F.A.F. You would be asking where you could send your subscriptions.

Childhood should be the happy time of life. There isn't too much happiness for most of us when we are grown up. The well-to-do of us try all we know to make our children happy.

These little people of the slums have no one trying to make them happy.

So the F.A.F. was started to try to bring just one day's happiness into as many dull little lives as possible. It isn't really only one day, though. There are the days before and the days after, and if you had heard the grimy mites discuss the joys of anticipation and of retrospection you would know that the great day itself is only part of the joy.

The excursion parties are made up generally of from 600 to 800 children, and three adults are allowed to every hundred children. This brings the total cost of a party of 600 up to £24 6s., but if anyone forwards a cheque for £8 2s., sufficient to pay for 200, the day is known by whatever name the donor cares to mention.

Each year is worked independently of any other, all the money subscribed during any one summer being used up before the end of September. Then the accounts are made up and a report published.

What has the F.A.F. done?

Quite a lot. It was started in *Pearson's Weekly* in the summer of 1892, and, with the aid of the practical advice of Mr. John Kirk, Secretary of the Ragged School Union, and the assistance of his Council, succeeded the first year in giving a day's outing to 24,000 London children. The movement is now assisted by other publications issued from the same office, and by the Daily Express, Midland Express, and North Mail.

This wasn't half a bad start, and after one year more of work in London it was found possible to extend the scheme of operations to other large towns. First, 5,000 children were given a day in Manchester, Liverpool, Glasgow and Birmingham, and then the scheme was extended, until it now includes the thirty-two biggest towns in the Kingdom, and the districts known as the Potteries and the Rhondda. The towns are:—

Aberdeen, Belfast, Blackburn, Birmingham, Bristol, Bradford, Bolton, Cardiff, Dublin, Derby, Dundee, Edinburgh, Glasgow, Gateshead, Hull, Halifax, London, Leeds, Liverpool, Leicester, Manchester, Nottingham, Newcastle, Norwich, Oldham, Portsmouth, Preston, Plymouth, Sheffield, Sunderland, Southampton, Wolverhampton.

In each of these places the excursions are arranged and looked after by a local committee of well-known ladies and gentlemen formed for that purpose, and at the end of the year each secretary forwards a certificate stating the amount of money received by the committee, and showing that it was spent according to the conditions laid down for the working of the Fund.

Nine hundred thousand children have enjoyed an F.A.F. day in the past ten summers. And you may take it those 900,000 units of happiness would roll up into a mountain of joy that would dwarf all the fun in all the slums as completely as Mount Everest dwarfs a mole-hill.

That's what it has done.

And it's going to do lots more—to take millions more children from the slums to the country. You are asked to help.

Subscriptions should be sent to the Hon. Sec., F.A.F., Pearson's Buildings, Henrietta Street, London, W.C. They will be acknowledged in *Pearson's Weekly*.

Remember that—

There are no expenses of management for the Fresh Air Fund.

Every penny subscribed goes to the children in food and fares.

All expenses are borne by the promoters—Pearson's and the Ragged School Union.

There are no distinctions of class or creed.

Ninepence pays for a day's happiness for a child; £8 2s. pays for a complete party of 200 with the necessary attendants.

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NEW SERIAL. **START TO-DAY.**

Held Apart

The Story of a Strange Double Fraud and its Influence upon some Young Hearts, a Great Name, and a Famous Fortune.

By R. NORMAN SILVER.

Author of "The Golden Dwarf," "A Daughter of Mystery," etc.

THE FIRST CHAPTERS.

Moira Davenal is sitting in the little cottage on Groudle Quay busy with her ribbon work. Sir Guy Vanbrugh is talking to her.

"Moira, I love you so much," he says. "Won't you——"

He pauses. There is a heavy step in the hallway of the cottage, and a burly figure enters the room.

"Good evening, Mr. Davenal. I'm off to London for the week-end and was just leaving a message for you with your daughter. How goes on the task of raising the *Sylph*?"

"I've found the last hole, Sir Guy," says John Davenal, who is a diver engaged in raising Sir Guy's yacht. "She'll soon be afloat."

After Sir Guy has gone a sailor appears at the door singing in drunken tones the scrap of a chorus:

"*Give my love to Nancy, the girl that I adore,*
Tell her that she'll never see her—her sailor any more."

The diver rises to his feet.

"Hullo, Hartigan!" he remarks loudly. "Glad to see you. Come in and make yourself comfortable."

While Moira goes out on an errand a conversation takes place between the two men, from which it appears that Moira is really Hartigan's daughter.

The sailor—who is a ship's steward—sits back in his chair and begins to sing again the drunken chorus.

He halts abruptly, for the door slowly opens, and a blind woman comes in.

Dennis Hartigan recognises her as his sister Kate. She tells her brother that she heard the song he was singing—sung in just the same way—once when she was sitting on a breakwater at Groudle. She also adds that the man who was singing said, evidently to someone with him: "This is out far enough. In with it;" after which there was a splash.

Hannah Davenal (Hartigan's wife and the diver's sister) is maid to Lady Tarleton. She is possessed of a secret with which she continually blackmails her mistress.

One afternoon Lady Tarleton and Hannah Davenal go down to Groudle Tower, and together they make a mysterious journey at midnight.

Two mornings later Hannah is found dead in bed, a towel smelling of chloroform is on her face, and over that a pillow on which are some dirty finger marks.

The police are informed of the tragedy, and Detective-Sergeant Ussher is sent from Scotland Yard to investigate.

Edward Stormont, the owner of Groudle Tower, and Lady Tarleton's brother-in-law, now arrives at Groudle with his friend Paul Jerome, a war-correspondent, and the following day Irene Tarleton comes in response to her mother's summons.

Dennis Hartigan is arrested on suspicion of causing his wife's death, but is soon released. He has a mysterious conversation with Lady Tarleton regarding a child.

"If—if the child were no longer in my path," Lady Tarleton murmurs, "I would give ten thousand pounds—to the man who told me so. Think it well over."

"I will, my lady," Hartigan answers.

On his way back to Groudle Tower Hartigan encounters his sister Kate. They return by way of the level-crossing. A train is in sight, rounding the curve. Dennis leaves his blind sister standing in between the metals along which the train is coming. She is rescued just in time by Paul Jerome, who is out riding. He leaps one gate, picks Kate up, and then leaps the other gate.

After leaving Kate in safety Jerome comes up with Hartigan, and tells him that he saw all that happened, and leaves him with a warning.

Lady Tarleton discovers that her daughter is very friendly with Jerome, and takes her to task about it. She does not know that Irene and Guy Vanbrugh have each agreed to go their own way. Jerome and Sir Guy meet in Groudle—they are old friends—and walk towards the Tower. On their way they pass a curious building which Sir Guy tells Jerome is the family mausoleum of the Lennoxes.

"Lennoxes?" repeats Paul Jerome, questioningly.

"Yes," rejoins Guy Vanbrugh, "Stormont's wife was a Lennox. Lady Tarleton is a Lennox. Stormont enjoys for life the Lennox estates and fortune. But as for the mausoleum it has not been opened for many a long year."

"Hasn't it?" queries the war-correspondent drily, "well, it's open now."

He points to a door that had been brought into sight by their onward progress. It was a low and massive portal, giving access to the lightless interior of the mausoleum. And against the blackness flickered a yellow spark, like a stricken match. While they looked, it went out.

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ELEVENTH CHAPTER.

What Paul Jerome Found.

Guy Vanbrugh strained his eyes towards the small, dark portal in the gloomy little pile of masonry; another flickering spark had showed abruptly against the solid obscurity that hid the interior of the mausoleum. Then he shrugged his shoulders.

"I suppose some repairs are going on," he said; "two or three hundred years of weather, in an open country like this, must tell even on granite."

The war-correspondent moved in the direction of the low structure. "Forgive my curiosity," he remarked, "but I am a journalist, and a journalist is inquisitive both by birth and training. As it happens, I have never seen the inside of a mausoleum."

He reached the moss-grown steps that went down into the grassy basin, at whose centre stood the silent resting-place of so many departed generations, and descended leisurely. Guy Vanbrugh followed him.

As they gained the lower level at a point opposite the entrance of the mausoleum, a man emerged from it, pulling the door to behind him. Paul Jerome started. It was Edward Stormont, and he was gazing at them with an air of surprise.

"Hullo, Jerome!" he said, "so you are exploring the grounds of Groudle Tower, eh?"

He stood with one hand on the stout ring of the solid metal door behind him, his glance lingering on the war-correspondent's companion. Jerome perceived that Guy Vanbrugh apparently did not recognise the speaker.

"You know Mr. Stormont, Vanbrugh?" he observed questioningly.

Edward Stormont's face changed. "Vanbrugh!" he exclaimed. "Guy, is it you, you rascal? How you young beggars do grow! Last time I saw you, you were a red-cheeked rogue on a Shetland pony."

Guy Vanbrugh clasped warmly the hand held out to him. "And you had not cultivated a beard, Mr. Stormont," he answered; "but I know you now by your eyes. I am very glad to meet you again."

Edward Stormont studied him gravely. "You are like your father, Guy," he added; "I was sorry, very sorry, to hear of his death. I read of it up in the Himalayas, in a chance copy of the *Times* that had been sent me. And I asked myself why Fate, that refused me death, had taken away a better man."

He turned to the war-correspondent. "I expect," he said, "you are wondering what I'm doing out here." He motioned to the sombre building at his back. "My ultimate refuge," he remarked; "as it has been that of many a grey head and grey heart before mine."

Paul Jerome did not reply. There was a reflection of profound bitterness in Edward Stormont's tones which repulsed sympathy no less than it did a conventional response. Edward Stormont roused himself.

"I—I did not know, Jerome," he said, "that you and Vanbrugh were acquainted." The war-correspondent reflected.

"No," he owned, "I don't fancy I have mentioned it. We met in London and on the Continent. I had, indeed, forgotten that the Vanbrughs are a Cumberland family, and that his place, the 'Close,' of which I had heard him speak, is near Groudle. Judge of my surprise when I met him just now, *en route* to call on Lady Tarleton."

"In pursuance of which object, Mr. Stormont," said Guy Vanbrugh, "I showed Jerome the short cut across the plantation, and, in passing the mausoleum, pointed it out to him. He has eyes like a hawk's, and noticed that the door was open. A spark within attracted our attention and curiosity drew us hither."

"Quite so," commented Stormont brusquely. "I—I did strike a match or two." He pushed wide the door of the mausoleum. "There is nothing to see," he said, "and yet, I believe, the scoundrelly people my sister-in-law leaves in charge of the Tower have been making a show-place of it, for I discovered, on paying a visit to the neighbourhood, that the door was unlocked and slightly ajar. Naturally, I investigated, and though the place proved empty, there are half-burnt matches on the floor inside. It is desecration to bring a parcel of gaping rustics to chuckle and stare under such a roof."

Running on irritably he led the way into the building, striking a vesta as he did so. Guy Vanbrugh and the war-correspondent found themselves in a roughly-circular space, floored and walled with polished granite, the latter honeycombed by regular recesses, almost all tenanted by the great leaden caskets for which they were devised.

"Ten generations of Lennoxes lie here," said the master of Groudle Tower. He paused, and they stood silently, the glow of the vesta shining on their faces. Edward Stormont threw it down.

"Shall we go?" he queried harshly.

The query was more a command than a request. Guy Vanbrugh and the war-correspondent obeyed. The fresh, cool air of the evening came pleasantly to their nostrils as they passed out.

Edward Stormont drew the door to and tried to close it firmly into its deep metal jambs. It resisted, he pushed it open again and examined the hinges. The door was of gun-metal, and they had not rusted in the least.

"I think I can see what is wrong," said Paul Jerome. He stooped down and swept the threshold clear of a twig or two and some gravel. The door thus eased fell solidly into its frame and Edward Stormont twisted the huge ring that shot its safe-like latch.

"I must send down and have it properly locked," he observed grimly; "nor shall it be invaded again, as I presume it has been, by local sightseers."

The set of his bearded jaw and the subdued gleam in his blue eyes said more than the words. Then he changed the subject, and the three walked away together, talking of indifferent matters. It was dusk when they reached the Tower.

Guy Vanbrugh's phaeton was standing outside the embattled entrance; he looked at his watch.

"I—I only drove over to see if I could be of any use," he said; "I had heard that some untoward event had occurred. But really it is far too late for a call, and your presence, Mr. Stormont, makes my offer unnecessary. Perhaps you will give my respects to my aunt and to Irene."

"Nonsense!" retorted Edward Stormont; "you must come in and have some dinner."

"I'm sorry!" he was told, "but I have some people dining at the 'Close' to-night. I had no idea it was so late."

Edward Stormont shook hands with him, and watched him drive down the avenue, after bidding the war-correspondent a hasty adieu.

"A nice lad!" he said; "Vanbrugh was a lucky beggar to have such a son!"

He sighed and entered the hall. The first of the dinner-bells was ringing; the war-correspondent went on to his room. Arrived there, he opened his left hand; he had kept it lightly closed since he had swept free the threshold of the mausoleum. In it lay a small, tortoiseshell hairpin—broken.

TWELFTH CHAPTER.

"I'm a Hard Man to Frighten."

Upon the windy wharves and quays of Groudle, in the darkness of the March evening, two men were walking up and down, aimlessly, as though they had no more definite object than that of keeping in motion. They were John Davenal and Dennis Hartigan. The ex-steward's cigar had burnt

Edward Stormont

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to a stump, its combustion hastened by the strong breeze. The red tip waxed and waned like a star. John Davenal's pipe had gone out. He bit restlessly at its mouthpiece as he walked.

"I'm afraid you got into yon trouble with the police on my account, Dennis," he said, suddenly breaking the silence; "if you hadn't bought that chloroform to doctor my pains with, there'd have been nought to bother you about."

Dennis Hartigan took his cigar out of his mouth. He paused a moment before speaking.

"What's the odds?" he growled; "all's well that ends well!"

The diver put his arm in the speaker's.

"It's good of you to look at it in that way, Dennis," he said; "very good."

The ex-steward glanced at his brother-in-law. John Davenal's tones had a curious ring in them—a ring that somehow suggested ingratiation. The diver drew his companion past the head of the little harbour and they went along the breakwater.

"You—you remember," pursued John Davenal, in the same tremulous, almost fawning fashion, "our arrangement about Moira? The allowance I was to make you while she stayed with me and remained in ignorance that you—that you were her father?"

"Yes," said Dennis Hartigan; "well, what of it?"

"N—nothing," answered the diver; "but I thought perhaps that now—now Hannah is dead, you would be going away—from Groudle, if not to sea—and that you might like some more money."

"Oh!" retorted the ex-steward. "Well, you can bet your bottom dollar money never comes amiss to me. But I'm not so sure that I want yours, John Davenal, not on those terms."

"I—I scarcely understand, Dennis," faltered the other. "What terms do you mean?" Dennis Hartigan released himself from the other's clasp upon his arm.

"About leaving Moira with you," he said; "it strikes me I shall need to take her away."

John Davenal paused in the windy dark of the breakwater.

He was leaning on his stick and swaying as if he were a very much older man.

"Take her away?" he gasped. "Why—why should you do that, what reason can you have?" Dennis Hartigan flung his cigar stump into the bay.

"My reasons are my business," he responded; "but if you've got to have one, let us say that I'm going to settle down somewhere further south, and that I want my daughter to manage the house for me."

The diver shook his head.

"You're not a home-keeping man, Dennis," he said; "besides, if that be so, you can have Kit; Kit is a rare little housekeeper. And then we might as well all move. I can retire now, and Plymouth or Southampton, or even Liverpool or Cardiff or Bristol, are nice places enough. You could live with us, Dennis, and it would cost you nothing."

"Pshaw!" exclaimed the ex-steward; "co-operative housekeeping don't suit me, and I can't stand Kit groping about and pawing me—I never could. If the reason I've given you isn't sufficient, choose another, or invent one of your own. Anyhow, I'm Moira's father, and I mean to have her."

John Davenal stood up abruptly and lifted his stick, instead of leaning on it. His powerful fingers were contracting and his nostrils dilated.

"Don't bully me, Dennis," he said sternly. "Perhaps I know more than you think for. I know that your reason—as you call it—is no better than a lie. Hannah threatened me, the—the very day she died, to take Moira away. But she told the truth, she owned that a mystery hung over the lass, that it had been allowed to hang for other folks' purposes. That was why she was going to take Moira from me, as, no doubt, it was why she had been given to me."

He raised his stick, quivering it passionately in his hand.

"Listen to me, Dennis," he continued. "I love Moira, and she loves me, and you are a wastrel and a drunkard. You shall not have Moira from me—no one can prove anything about her now that Hannah is dead; I will not even admit that she is your daughter."

The ex-steward sneered.

"I can easily prove she isn't yours," he snarled. "How will Moira like that, John Davenal? Your wife never had any babies. You've managed cleverly enough so far, pretending Moira had been left with a wet-nurse when you brought the missus home to Groudle to die. But I can soon prick that bubble."

John Davenal set his strong, white teeth.

"Prove away," he said, "you can't prove Moira into your evil charge. I'm not a poor man—I'll go to law. There's the Lord Chancellor of England, Dennis, to be a father to her till the law's made up its mind, and where's the man that dares touch her till it has? I'll have the law on you for two or three years, Dennis, if it brings me to the poor-house. But before I'm broke she'll be twenty-one and—*married!*"

A savage ejaculation burst from Dennis Hartigan's lips.

"You obstinate old fool!" he cried. "Don't think you can play the sea-lawyer with me. When I say I'll have the girl, I will have her, sweetheart or no sweetheart, or I'll make you and her rue the hour you said me nay."

The diver faced him unflinchingly.

"Threaten and swear as much as you like, Dennis," he said. "I'm a hard man to frighten, and Moira's more to me than life or money, or peace of mind. I told Hannah she shouldn't have her, and now she's dead, I tell you the same. I'll pay you fair and honest, what I said I would, and, if you speak a word to Moira or to the lawyers, you'll not get that. Make up your mind which it's to be, Dennis, and good night to you."

He turned on his heel and went back along the breakwater. The ex-steward stood silent, his lips distorted in a sneer, his eyes glittering. Then, with a short, forced expiration like the snarl of a cat, he darted down one of the triple flights of landing steps towards the black water.

To a ring in one of the landing platforms, a string of boats was moored, they floated peacefully some distance from the breakwater in the harbour basin. Dennis Hartigan drew the leading boat into the shadow of the stairs, loosed it from the line, slid in, and sculled himself noiselessly up the harbour, keeping in the shadow.

On the further side of the quiet pool he landed, secured the boat, crawled up on to a deserted wharf, and, speeding along it, reached the cobble-stoned level of Groudle Quay.

Approaching stealthily the side fence of the diver's cottage, he climbed over and crawled along inside the large garden, screening himself dexterously, till he gained the vicinity of the entrance-wicket. Here he crouched down, hidden by a row of privet bushes. He had drawn a sailor's knife from his pocket, and fastened it open by a spring. So he waited.

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At length the latch of the wicket clicked. It swung wide, and John Davenal came in. As he passed, Dennis Hartigan leant out and buried the knife-blade in his back. The diver fell with a groan. There was the crackle of a twig or two under foot, a rustle of bushes on the other side of the garden, and Dennis Hartigan was gone.

THIRTEENTH CHAPTER.
"How Very Romantic!"

"Morning, Ussher!"

"Good morning, sir!"

The detective paused before the high-backed oaken settle that flanked the huge, carved fire-place in the hall of Groudle Tower. On it, his feet stretched out to the blaze, his arms folded, sat Paul Jerome; he had looked up as Mr. Ussher passed across the hall, and called out a cheerful if brusque greeting.

He smiled thoughtfully as he noticed the signs of importance in the detective's bearing—the tightly-buttoned overcoat, the pursed lips, the drooped eyelids, and, above all, the red-bound note-book carried with a finger between the leaves, and the others clasping it jealously.

"I believe your inquest comes off to-day, Ussher?" he said. The detective put his right hand to his hip, and stood with the left standing stiffly at his side, holding the note-book.

"It does, sir," he answered, drily. The war-correspondent surveyed him with provoking amusement.

"Going to arrest anyone on the coroner's warrant?" he demanded.

Mr. Ussher drew himself up.

"No, sir," he said, "only formal evidence will be given, and then the inquest will be adjourned."

"So you own yourself beaten, so far?" observed Jerome.

The detective glanced at him between his half-closed lids.

"Scarcely that, sir," he said. "The case has assumed even more importance than before. Last night John Davenal, the brother of the deceased woman, was found lying in his own garden, stabbed in the back."

"Good Heavens!" exclaimed the war-correspondent, starting up; "what an extraordinary thing!"

Mr. Ussher showed the whites of his eyes in a flash of gratification at the effect of his news. The sternly official expression returned to his large, plump features.

"The fact serves to confirm my view," he added loftily, "that the murderer of Hannah Davenal was not a member of the Tower household. It is probable that some person, with or without good reason, had a grudge against both the Davenals. As, in neither case, had robbery taken place, or been attempted, and as each attack was most deliberate, the motive cannot be other than revenge."

"Admirably deduced!" exclaimed Paul Jerome, with an impenetrable assumption of enthusiasm, "but about this stabbing business, do I understand that Davenal is dead, or dying?"

Mr. Ussher put his head on one side.

"Hard to say, sir," he responded, "the poor fellow has lost a lot of blood—the knife glanced off the shoulder-blade, and made a great gash in the chest-wall, cutting into the substance of the lung, the doctor reports. There has been internal hæmorrhage, he is in a dangerous condition."

The war-correspondent knitted his brows.

"And there is no clue to his assailant?" he asked.

The detective answered in the negative.

"He went out with his brother-in-law," Paul Jerome was told, "for a walk and a smoke. They parted at the head of the breakwater, after strolling in its neighbourhood for some while. An hour after, Davenal's daughter fancied she heard the click of the gate-latch. Not hearing anyone knock, she looked out at the front door, and saw her father lying on the path."

"His brother-in-law," said the war-correspondent, reflectively, "that is the man you arrested, Ussher—Hartigan, wasn't it?"

Mr. Ussher frowned.

"It was, sir," he replied, "but the man seems to bear no malice. I found him quite willing to give me every assistance in his power. He even asked me if I wanted to arrest him again, for the attack on his brother-in-law." And the detective smiled grimly.

"And didn't you?" queried the war-correspondent.

The detective bit his lip.

"You will have your little joke, Mr. Jerome," he said. "No, I didn't—Hartigan had gone straight to a public-house on the quay by the breakwater, and ordered some supper. On his way back to the Half Brick Inn, where he has been lodging, he called at Hawthorn Cottage, his brother-in-law's place, to speak to his sister, a blind girl, who lives with the Davenals. Finding what had happened, and that Davenal was practically at the point of death, he insisted on the police being informed, and himself came to the station."

"Very proper," commented the war-correspondent, "and very discreet."

Mr. Ussher adjusted the elastic band about his note-book.

"Oh," he answered, "the fellow is hard-headed enough, and yet he is communicative too, when he is handled tactfully. He tells me that his wife was eccentric and avaricious to a degree, and that her brother, John Davenal, is not unlike her in eccentricity, though he is by no means ungenerous. Hartigan thinks that they may jointly have excited the hatred of some third party, both being extremely obstinate, not to say cantankerous."

"A feasible theory," said Paul Jerome. "By the way, I suppose this last remark was after you had broached to him your view that his wife's death and the attempted murder of his brother-in-law might be due to the same agent?"

"Y—yes," answered Mr. Ussher, reflectively; "I believe I did mention it."

The war-correspondent nodded.

"I only wondered," he said, "if the idea were exclusively yours."

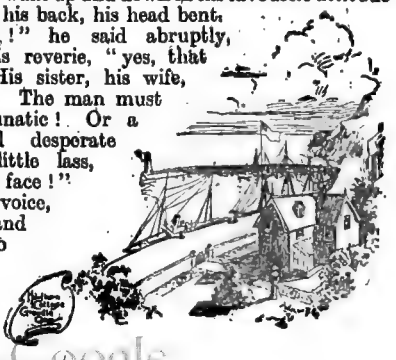
The detective put his note-book in his pocket.

"Oh, yes," he said, "my own exclusively," and, with an added "Good morning!" and a semi-military salute, moved off across the hall and vanished into the offices at its rear.

Paul Jerome gazed after him with a quizzical expression on his sunburnt countenance. The humorous tremor about the corners of his mouth disappeared suddenly, he sat down on the settle again, and fell to contemplating the red hollows in the glowing coals.

The ancient clock in the hall ticked away the moments, and still the war-correspondent seemed to chew the cud of his thoughts, and his face grew graver and graver. At length he rose and began to walk up and down in his favourite attitude—his hands behind his back, his head bent.

"Kate Hartigan!" he said abruptly, speaking out of his reverie, "yes, that was her name. His sister, his wife, his brother-in-law. The man must be a homicidal lunatic! Or a very daring and desperate scoundrel. Poor little lass, she had a sweet face!"



A clear, girlish voice, somewhat raised and sharpened, cut into his soliloquy.

"How very romantic!" it said, and Paul Jerome

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wakened out of his brooding, to find himself confronted by Irene Tarleton. Irene's mouth was mirthful, and her cheeks flushed, but her eyes lacked their usual softness and vivacity. She wore a riding-habit, and played with a slender bamboo whip.

"So this is where you come to dream your day-dreams?" she went on. "Excuse my eavesdropping, I couldn't help it, really, and I didn't hear the lady's name. But perhaps you didn't mention it. Never mind, I'm not curious."

The war-correspondent flushed, but under his moustaches his lips were twitching.

"I'm afraid you wouldn't know—ahem—the lady's name if I were to mention it," he said, "and yet, to use the language of the melodramatist, her humble cottage lies within sight of your castle windows. She is, to be exact, the sister-in-law of your mother's luckless maid, Davenal. Her name is Kate Hartigan, and she is blind.

"Yesterday, as it happened, I was able to do her a chance service, she was within an ace of being run down at the level-crossing. I was out riding, and managed to get her off it in the nick of time."

Irene paled. "And risked your life, I've no doubt," he was told, half-admiringly, half-irritably. "Is she—is she really very pretty?"

"Very," said Paul Jerome, "in a sad, childish, querulous fashion. She is a bit of an oddity, I think, poor little soul."

He took her gloved hand into his. "I believe," he observed, "that I ought to be allowed to say 'how do you do?' Do you know I have not seen you since last night, and at dinner, as well as afterwards, you scarcely spoke to me."

"Did I," murmured Irene, plucking at the loop of her habit, "well, you see, Mr. Jerome, my aunt in Yorkshire is really a most unendurable person."

The war-correspondent stared; then a light broke into his face, and he smiled.

"I'm very much flattered," he replied; "if I could I would reassure Lady Tarleton. But I—I can't."

Irene blushed to her eyebrows.

"Really, Mr. Jerome!" she said.

Paul Jerome was imperturbable.

"You are going out riding?" he asked.

Irene nodded.

"With a groom to chaperon me," she said, a suspicion of school-girlish malice in her tone.

The war-correspondent looked at his watch.

"Stormont is engaged with his steward," he remarked; "ride round by the place they call the 'Half Brick Inn.' I will commandeer old Buckshot, Stormont's hunter, and ride him across country. I will be there as soon as you. Do you mind?"

Irene laughed.

"If I go to Yorkshire," she said, "I shall blame you for it."

And she caught up her habit and left him alone. But she looked back over her shoulder as she passed out through the side door that led to the stable, and the war-correspondent sprang up the stairs, three steps at the time, to dress.

FOURTEENTH CHAPTER.

Guy Vanbrugh is Detected.

"Mr. Davenal anywhere about?"

Guy Vanbrugh called the question to a burly, authoritative-looking personage in muddy blue overalls, who was standing on the wet and sandy deck of a very dank and bedraggled yet well-shaped little steam-vessel. It was the ill-fated *Sylph*, safely ensconced in dry dock, and awaiting the attentions of the repairers.

The foreman came down the gang-plank to the dockside.

"No, sir," Guy Vanbrugh was told, "he calculated to leave the job to us once she was high and dry again. Besides, sir, haven't you heard about him?"

The Baronet started.

"No," he said, "what's wrong? I—I was going up to the cottage, but thought I might find him here, I—I wanted a word with him personally."

"You'll scarcely have that for a while, sir," replied the foreman; "John Davenal's fighting for his life, sir. He was struck down at his own gates last night, sir—stabbed in the back by some hound, him that's as well liked as any man in Groudle."

"Good Heavens!" exclaimed Guy Vanbrugh aghast.

"Yes, sir," added the other; "and not even in a fight, or after a word or two of argument, but by some cowardly brute who daren't meet him face to face, and must steal up behind to run a knife into him. It's touch and go, the doctor's say, whether the poor fellow'll win through it."

Guy Vanbrugh collected his scattered senses.

"I—I will go round at once," he said, and continued hastily, "I may be able to help in some way."

The foreman sighed.

"I'm afraid not, sir," he rejoined, "though it's kind of you to think of it. But John Davenal is one that's thriven, and they do tell me he's had the best doctor in Groudle and a couple of hospital nurses with him turn about. The end of it's out of our hands, sir, it must be for his own strength to pull him through now. They say the hæmorrhage is very bad, sir, that's the trouble."

Guy Vanbrugh murmured something in reply, and hastened off, out of the small shipyard and through the waterside shed and wharves of Groudle to the less active quarter where the diver's cottage fronted the bay, across a rough cobble-stoned level, and the calm surface of the sheltered harbour.

He shivered slightly as he passed in at the wicket—it was there, if he had been correctly informed, that the diver had been stricken down by his unseen enemy—and closed it heedfully that it might not click or shriek. Then he went on through the neat garden and tapped cautiously upon the door. The blind girl opened it. She was very pale, and her eyelids were flushed as if by weeping.

"Yes?" she said questioningly.

"It is I, Sir Guy Vanbrugh," answered the visitor gently; he knew her well by sight—"I have only just heard of Mr. Davenal's sad condition. May I see Miss Davenal for a moment—perhaps I may be of some use."

Kate Hartigan drew the door wide.

"Will you come in, sir?" she said, and retreated.

Guy Vanbrugh acted on the invitation, took off his hat and entered the pleasant kitchen beyond the diminutive ante-room; Kit had pushed open the door of that also.

"Moira," she said, "here is Sir Guy Vanbrugh, to ask about your father."

The Baronet stepped forward. The room was empty save for Moira, himself, and the blind girl, and the lovers had no need to restrain the language of the eye and hand.

Moira had risen from the couch by the window, she came and put her hands in his, and the tears overran her long lashes. Sir Guy Vanbrugh lifted her small, strong fingers to his lips, and kissed them silently.

"I—I went round to the yard," he observed, trying to speak conventionally, "to see how they were getting on with the *Sylph*—and also to have a word with your father

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about another matter. And, of course, they told me. It is very strange and terrible."

"Yes," answered Moira, unsteadily "we—we can't understand it at all."

She was trembling, as though the sight of him had unnerved her. The eyes of each were fastened upon those of the other, in a gaze more eloquent than words. Kit stood silently by, listening to their forced and halting exchanges of conversation.

"I—I fancied perhaps I might be of some assistance," said Guy Vanbrugh awkwardly.

Moira shook her head.

"No—no, thank you, Sir Guy," she replied, lingering upon his name with a caressing intonation, "the doctor is an old friend of father's, he sent in two hospital nurses, and a specialist was here this morning from Liverpool. But—but they say it all depends upon father's strength."

Her voice broke, and she smothered a sob.

Her lover could not bear to see her fighting so desperately for self-control.

"I will not say more then," he murmured, "than that I am very much grieved. I will drive down to-night and see how your father gets on. We—we must hope for the best."

"I am trying," faltered Moira, "but you see, it is so hard. He was not going down any more, he was so happy to think that he could pass nearly all his time with—with us."

Guy Vanbrugh had stepped towards the door, he cast a significant glance at it, and Moira moved to show him out. As they passed into the little ante-room, he drew her to him. For the moment they were practically alone together.

"My darling," he whispered, "what a horrible thing!"

Moira buried her face in his breast.

"I—I nearly told him last night about—about us," she sobbed; "but we were interrupted."

"Is there any reason to suspect someone in particular?" queried her lover.

Moira choked back her sobs.

"No," she said, "we can think of no one, and the doctors will not let the police go near him so long as there is a chance of his getting better. They say it might kill him."

Guy Vanbrugh patted the hand that she had laid on his shoulder.

"Your father has a fine constitution, dear," he told her; "and he has lived a very regular and temperate life. That is all in his favour."

Moira brushed the tears out of her eyes.

"If—if only the diving were not so bad for people's hearts," she said, "that is what makes them all so anxious."

Her lover kissed a wet, white cheek that was very near his own, and whispered soothing words of love and tenderness. He did not notice that the outer door had swung ajar, and that someone was approaching it up the path, someone who had just stepped out of a smart victoria at the gate.

Suddenly the wicket-latch clicked, and Moira looked up. It was too late. Lady Tarleton, pausing on the threshold of Hawthorn Cottage, had glanced into the small entrance-hall, and perceived none other than Sir Guy Vanbrugh with a fair and ruffled head pillowed on his breast.

(Another long instalment next week.)

Mrs. Younglove: "See this beautiful ring John bought me." Mrs. Oldbird: "What has he been up to now?"

"What do you think you will make out of my daughter's talent?" Professor (absent-mindedly): "About half-a-guinea a lesson, if the piano lasts."

He (at parting): "Oh, Ethel! You have broken my——" She (interrupting): "Not your heart surely!" He (sadly): "No; my whole pocketful of cigars."

Nell: "Did you enjoy the performance last night?" Belle: "No. It was stupid. Nearly every woman in the house took her hat off, and there was nothing to look at but the play."

Your Editor Chats.

The second list in our great new competition appears on page 421. I take this opportunity of advising readers who have not yet entered it to do so without further delay; they are sure to regret it if they let the opportunity slip by. In addition to being a profitable occupation from the monetary point of view, the solving of puzzles is both interesting and instructive. It is really astonishing how much one learns from them.

Fifty pounds in cash, which is being given away as the first prize, is a sum which would be acceptable to anyone, and it is not often possible to obtain so much money in such an easy manner. There are two other cash prizes of £25 and £10 each, in addition to which twenty-five of our much-appreciated Gramophones will be awarded.

As an entertainer a Gramophone is unrivalled, and it is so simple to manipulate. All you have to do to get the sounds out of the instrument is to put the record in position, then set the machine in motion. It will continue to reproduce the sounds engraved on the record just as long as you wish it to do so. Each of the Gramophones offered in the competition is accompanied by two records, and is fitted with a Concert Sound-Box, which brings out the tone of the instrument much more loudly and clearly.

Those readers who did not decide to enter the competition until it was too late to obtain a copy of last week's Short Stories may enter now by purchasing a copy of last Friday's *Pearson's Weekly* or *Home Notes*, both of which contain the first list of sentences. The price of each of these papers is one penny.

The day after this paper is in your hands the Boat-Race between the Universities of Oxford and Cambridge will be decided. The tale of a love affair which came out of one of these events is recorded on pages 438 and 439. The title of it is "True Blue."

Next week's cover will consist of a picture illustrating a very dramatic incident from our splendid new serial "Held Apart," concerning which so many favourable opinions are expressed. The picture is the work of Mr. Albert Morrow, the well-known artist. It will be beautifully printed in green and gold.

On page 431 you will find something about the Fresh Air Fund, that great institution for giving children a day in the country, with plenty to eat and drink, for the small sum of ninepence for each child. I hope all my readers will contribute generously to it this year. All contributions will be acknowledged in *Pearson's Weekly*. If every person who reads the notices about the Fund were to send only ninepence there would be no disappointed faces among the thousands of children in the large towns of the British Isles. They would all be able to have their day in the country—the one bright spot in the whole year to many who never see anything but bricks and mortar. If you can't spare ninepence smaller sums will be accepted gratefully; they all go to swell the big total which it is hoped to reach this year.

Your Editor.

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True - - Blue.

A Boat Race Love Story.

Millie Grahame was in a high state of excitement. She had never seen the boat race before, but now at last she had got her wish, and her brother had promised to take her.

Besides this, Ethel Fortescue, her greatest friend, had persuaded her brother to take her, and was going too.

Millie and Ethel had been friends since childhood; but although Ethel knew Millie's brother Gus very well, yet Millie had never met Wilfred Fortescue, and she felt very glad that he was coming to make a fourth, for she knew from experience that Gus always monopolised Ethel.

She thought to herself, "If only those two boys chum in well together I shall have a chance of a good old confab. with Ethel. I have such lots to tell her, and I want to hear what she thinks of my idea of having my new frock for the dance to-night pale blue in honour of the victors, for of course Cambridge will win; that goes without saying."

At this point Millie snipped the ends of a pale blue rosette she had just completed, and surveyed it with admiring eyes.

Just then her brother Gus entered the room, and seeing her work, cried out—

"'Hullo, you are not going to wear that washed out old cabbage stalk, are you? That the right colour for you," and he pointed to a little swallow of Oxford blue in his buttonhole, and held out a similar one to his sister.

Millie refused it with a great show of indignation.

"You wretched boy," she said, with withering scorn.

"Oh, you do rise so beautifully," teased her brother, diving into her work basket. "Where's my rosette? I suppose you've made me one like yours."

"I have," replied his sister, somewhat mollified, for she was a staunch light blue. "One just like mine, and I've made one for Ethel, too."

"You can give me that," said Gus, hastily, "I'll give it her myself; and now do go and get ready, and look sharp, there's a good girl, or we shall never get our train, and the Fortescues are going to wait for us on the railway bridge."

The Fortescues were already waiting for them on the bridge when they arrived. Gus sprang up, schoolboy fashion, four steps at a time, and Millie followed him as quickly as might be.

Ethel Fortescue was only a year older than Millie, and they had both only just left school; but somehow during these last few weeks of separation she seemed to Millie to have grown out of all recognition, and to have become quite the woman.

Millie was not conscious that Ethel was observing the same alteration in herself, and she turned from scrutinising her friend to glance at her brother Wilfred, and met his eyes very gravely regarding her in his turn.

The impression she received was that she had never seen anyone quite so determined-looking in her life; but she liked his face, and thought him quite as good-looking as his sister.

She did not trouble to bestow further thought upon him, and little imagined that she had made a very deep impression on him.

By the time Millie had reached the top of the bridge and joined the others, Gus had already taken complete possession of Ethel, who now, after affectionately greeting Millie, casually introduced her brother, and proceeded to march off with Gus, leaving Milly and Wilfred to bring up the rear.

Wilfred was most certainly bent on doing his best to please and interest his companion, but Millie was not in a very amiable temper.

Firstly, she was disappointed at not being able to walk with Ethel, and secondly she noticed, with severest disapproval, that Wilfred had in his buttonhole a bird of Oxford blue identical with the ones she and Gus had so disdained.

She responded coldly to Wilfred's overtures, and in despair he reverted to the weather for the third time, and added—

"I hope it will be a good race. By the way, you're Cambridge, I see, like Ethel. I'm Oxford myself."

"I'm not," said Millie. "Gus and Ethel and I are all Cambridge. At school we used to have tugs of war, the Oxford girls against the Cambridge girls, and Ethel and I always pulled for Cambridge, and we always won."

"I think most girls are Cambridge," said Wilfred thoughtlessly, "unless they have a special reason for being Oxford. It's the pale blue takes their fancy, and they think the colour suits them; at least, it suits you," he said, looking admiringly at Milly.

She had on a black coat and skirt and a pale blue scarf, and trimmings of the same in her hat, and knew that they became her amazingly, but she chose to put on an offended air, and was quite childishly indignant with him for assigning such a ridiculous reason to her sex for its choice of favours.

At the last they all had to hurry up for their train, and were packed into a compartment together with a dozen other people of very "assorted sizes," as Wilfred whispered to Millie, making her laugh in spite of herself.

After that she relaxed her dignity a little, to Fortescue's immense relief and delight, and even condescended to beg him to throw away the Oxford swallow, but he laughed at that and shook his head.

"I've got a cousin rowing stroke in the Oxford boat," he said, "and I'm going to Trinity College, Oxford, myself later on; but I'll tell you what, I'll wear your colour if you'll wear mine."

But to this Millie would by no means consent.

The four of them secured good places along the bank, where they had a capital view of the finish. Cambridge won, to Millie's unbounded delight and triumph.

Gus and Ethel seemed by this time to have become too absorbed in each other to be properly interested in the proceedings, and even Wilfred was not nearly so cast down as Millie had fondly hoped.

"I should have been bitterly disappointed if Cambridge had lost," she declared, "and *I* know no one rowing, and *you* have a cousin in the Oxford boat. Aren't you ashamed of him?"

Wilfred laughed.

"Better luck next time," he said. "Wait till *I* row stroke," he added confidently. "*You'll see.*"

Millie looked at him contemptuously, and a cloud came over his face.

During the years that followed Millie often thought of this day. In the meantime she and Ethel had gone to be "finished" abroad, and had since spent most of their time travelling on the Continent.

Very little had they seen of their respective brothers. Millie had seen Gus hardly at all, and Wilfred only at intervals, for he was usually away in outlandish parts or busy with his tutor.

But now once again they were all in England, and Wilfred was completing his last year at Oxford. He had done well.

too, in his work, and was to row stroke—as he had told Millie he would—in the next boat race.

The boat race day had come round again, and found Millie and Gus staying with the Fortescues.

Ethel was engaged to be married in the summer, though she was still the best of friends with Gus, who was fond of referring to his "blighted affections," but still continued to fall in love on an average once a fortnight.

Gus was now on the Thames Conservancy, and his was the proud privilege of following the race in the Umpire's boat.

Millie and Ethel were to watch from a friend's house overlooking the course.

Millie's interest in the race was far greater than it had ever been before. She knew someone in the boats, the wrong boat certainly, and although she had religiously decorated herself with light blue, she was not so sure after all whether, in her heart of hearts, she wished it to be the winning colour.

Ethel, since her engagement to an Oxford man, had gone over to the enemy completely, and was openly sporting dark blue as if she had worn it all her life.

She told Millie she was very silly to stick to Cambridge now there were so many reasons she should be Oxford. "And I am sure Fred will be very hurt about it," she added.

Millie did not take much notice of what her friend said; she was giving all her attention to the crews, and she actually drew a breath of delight as Oxford shot past, and reached the winning post, and the crowd started cheering—"Hurrah for Oxford. Oxford wins! Oxford, Oxford!"

"Well, I *am* glad," exclaimed Ethel; "indeed, it is quite a relief to me that it's all over. I declare I don't want excitement like this every day. I do hope Fred won't be quite done up with his exertions. You know we are having a sort of reception to-morrow, and we don't want to be disappointed of our 'lion.'

"By the way, Millie, you won't wear Cambridge blue to-morrow after this triumph, will you? It would be like a slap in the face to Fred."

"It won't make any difference to him," declared Millie, "and of course I shall; that new blouse is the only decent thing I've got. And Fred's sure to be all right, Ethel," she added, "so you need not be afraid of his disappointing us."

Millie was feeling very gay and light-hearted, unaccountably so, in view of Cambridge's defeat; but the next day as she completed her toilette, she did almost wish her dress had been any other colour.

As she clasped her bracelets she took a final peep at herself in the glass, and really pale blue suited her so admirably that already she felt reconciled.

Wilfred's words of so long ago, "It's the colour that fetches the girls," recurred to her, and she laughed to herself, and determined to be very nice to him for once.

She came downstairs, and found Wilfred standing somewhat gloomily by the fireplace.

"Cambridge for ever!" she laughed, as she greeted him.

"By Jove! You'll win me over to that colour before you've done," he said, his face brightening at her friendly manner.

"Nonsense, why I'm going to congratulate you on your splendid success," she said, holding out her little hand to him which he took eagerly, and held fast in both his own, as if he would never let it go.

"Do you remember," he said, with his eyes fastened on her, "I asked you once to give me your Cambridge rosette for my Oxford bird? Will you give me one of your ribbons now?" He touched the dainty pale blue bow at her wrist. "I won't ask you to wear my colour in return this time," he said.

"Suppose," she said, colouring under his ardent gaze, "that I won't give it under any other condition?"

"Oh, Millie, do you mean what you say? Do you care for me a little bit at last?"

Millie's head drooped lower, and Fred drew her unresisting into his arms.

"I'll be true blue to you, my darling," he said, with his lips pressed to her hair, "true blue as long as I live!"

Ellice Beere.

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Proving that 'Tis the Unexpected that Happens.

"This is what I call a most outrageous interference with the liberty of the subject!" mused Miss Kate Wheatley, who did not look so indignant as her remark would have led anyone to suppose.

She frowned, however, as she raised the letter in order to peruse it again.

"This is how it stands," she continued, after a second perusal, shaking the paper at an imaginary individual in the corner. "Aunt Eliza, called 'Liza, for short, has some money—a fair amount of it, as I understand.

"Like most people who have money, she thinks that everybody else wants to handle it when she has gone to—to where they don't use that sort of thing, I must say, for lack of knowledge concerning the exact destination of Aunt 'Liza.

"So, like many more people once again, she thinks she can use that money, and the desire of others to have it, by forcing them to do something which pleases her; it may not please the others, but they do not count in Aunt 'Liza's calculations.

"Very well! Now, Aunt 'Liza thinks that it will be much better to keep that money in one sum than to divide it between the only two relatives she has. It happens that one of these relatives is a woman, myself, to wit!—and the other is a man!

"I didn't know of his existence till I received this disagreeable communication, and he is possibly in a like position. So, Aunt 'Liza, good lady, decrees that we must marry one another, and so keep the money in the family. If not, she will carry out her desire to keep it one sum and in the family by giving it to an orphanage.

"I don't see the logic of that decision, but then, I'm not Aunt 'Liza. Both she and I ought to be thankful for that! I am!"

She twisted the sheet of notepaper in her fingers, her brows knitted in reflection.

"Easy circumstances and life with a man not of your own choosing, and who is certain to be somewhat like dear auntie, or she wouldn't take to him; or hard work, with independence and a chance of marrying a man with whom you have fallen in love; that's the affair in a nutshell, and I choose the latter.

"I haven't fallen in love with a man yet, but I may. So here goes to tell Aunt 'Liza. If my reply gets there first, she can't blame the man. I'm sorry for him, but I can't bear the idea that he should be the first to say that he doesn't want me!"

Miss Kate Wheatley wrote the note that settled her future career and then turned her attention to the necessity of gaining a livelihood for herself. She revolved in her mind the prospects of a governess' life as against those of an amanuensis to a literary man and a position as a lady clerk.

Without coming to any proper decision, she bought the current issue of the largest circulation in the world, and deliberately wrote letters in application for all three positions.

"If I were a man, I should toss for it, probably," she remarked. "Being a woman, I adopt a much more sensible course and try all three. I could fill all three positions, and my choice will most likely be made for me!"

She received a reply to the letter answering the advertisement for an amanuensis, but she found that her prospective employer was a doctor; he was a man of means, retired from practice (in which he could not have made much of a mark), and devoting himself to municipal affairs.

"You are very young," he observed, looking at her over his glasses.

"I shall get out of that, sir!" replied Miss Wheatley demurely, and the retired medico hardly knew how to take it.

"You say you can do all I want," he resumed blandly. "I should like to test you at shorthand and also your skill on this new-fangled machine which people say is equal to lengthening your life because it saves time." He waved his hand towards the typewriter.

He was sarcastic, and this aroused Kate to answer in the same strain.

"It is better than medicine, then! I prefer the typewriter to drugs! Suppose you dictate something to me and see what I can do?"

Dr. William Banks cast a quick glance at the girl; it was new to him to be spoken to in that manner, and he could not feel certain whether it was innocence or impudence. However, he tried her skill both in shorthand and typewriting, and was delighted.

She spoke French and German, too, which was very convenient. He engaged her at a salary of £2 a month, with board and lodging, to begin with; Kate accepted, and the retired medico chuckled at having made so good a bargain.

"She is well educated," he said gleefully, rubbing his hands. "It will make me appear big in the eyes of those who know me, and that is worth a good deal; besides which, she will prove a useful companion in time!"

From this it may be gleaned that Miss Kate Wheatley had made a slight impression on the elderly gentleman's heart

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as well as upon his purse; both impressions were equally slight, but both had the chance of improving.

The work was light, and she was made comfortable in the house by an old cook, so she settled down to life as secretary to Dr. William Banks, and lost even the vestige of regret which had remained with her in connection with Aunt 'Liza's money.

Dr. Banks' appreciation of his secretary's qualifications increased as the days passed.

At the end of the first week he asked her to sit with him in the evening, dividing her time between reading to him and to herself, or doing other little things for either, as occasion offered. This was just as agreeable to Kate as to him, and she was pleased.

After a month he doubled her salary, and at the end of the third month he had decided that Kate bore so striking a resemblance to the lamented Mrs. Banks that he must seriously make up his mind to instal her as that inestimable lady's successor.

Mrs. Banks, it may be stated, had been somewhat rotund in figure, very full-faced—some rude persons called it fat—and had scanty red hair; Kate was slim, with golden-brown hair, and well-formed features.

A charming complexion and vivacious expression, instead of Mrs. Banks' florid tint and stolid look, completed the contrast; the fact that the doctor saw a great likeness is another proof of the power of the tender passion over an old man. He would pass his hand over his head, at the particular spot where the hair was thin, and sigh. Kate noticed this one evening, and smiled behind her book.

"Probably he is sighing as he remembers that the late Mrs. B. used to pull his hair just there!" she said to herself. "It is very touching when a woman leaves behind her so much—or is it so little?—to be remembered by!" The true state of affairs never entered her head, although she was more than ordinarily observant.

The condition of the susceptible portion of Dr. Banks' anatomy had arrived at that condition when someone else appeared on the scene; this was Dr. William Banks, Jr., who had been practising in a small country town and had sold his business in order to return to the Metropolis and secure a more lucrative one.

He was introduced to the secretary, and it did not take him long to grasp the situation, especially when his father tried to point out that Kate's hair was like that of the late lamented.

"It's a good thing I turned up!" declared Dr. William when he retired for the night. "The old gentleman is making a perfect fool of himself with that girl, who, I must say, doesn't encourage him, so far as I can see. I must put a stop to it! Dear me! Once a man, twice a child; that's what the proverb says, and I fear that my respected father is getting into his second childhood!"

Three days later, William the younger reasoned thus with himself:

"She's the best girl it has been my luck to come across, and it would be a sin for her to waste her young life tied to an old man like father. I don't care to do it, but I'll cut him out with her, for the girl's own sake. I think we should make a good, well-matched couple!"

He surveyed himself in the glass and saw a man who—well, he "took after" his mother, as people say. His expression was more deserving of that name, as there was some expression in it. He smiled complacently, and proceeded to sketch out a plan of campaign.

He joined the party in the evening and made himself agreeable to the secretary, conversing with her on educational and social topics, on which she was well informed.

Dr. William the elder was not displeased; he was so confident of his own conquest that he saw no danger, but rather accepted it as a good omen. William the younger would welcome his stepmother very heartily and be glad to retain so charming a lady in the family.

The wooing of William the younger did not proceed as he had hoped; it was not conducive to progress to have Miss

(*Continued overleaf.*)

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Kate attending to William the elder during the day, and then to have him interjecting his remarks in the conversation during the evening just where that remark was not desirable. William stood it for a time, but finally resolved that he must bring up some reinforcements in order to enable him to defeat his father.

He reflected, and an idea occurred to him. He had a friend, a young man studying at the Bar; this friend would have his evenings free, no doubt, and could come to the house and play chess or two-handed whist with William the elder, while his son played at whispers with the secretary. Good idea! He wrote off at once and the friend made his appearance that very evening.

"I say, old man," said William the younger, confidentially, when he welcomed the friend, "I want your assistance. The old gentleman is doing his level best to make an ass of himself. I want your help."

"To accelerate the progress?" asked the friend, without the ghost of a smile. "I should have thought that he could get all the help he would ever be likely to want at home!"

"So he can! So don't try to be funny!" retorted William the younger. "But the assistance is unconscious! That's too much for you, isn't it? Well, listen, and don't be too sharp!"

"Go on!" encouraged the friend.

"The old gentleman has engaged a secretary, and if I don't look smart she'll be engaged in another capacity! He is in love with her. So am I! She's got to marry me, and I want you to play chess or something with him to keep him quiet while I lay siege to the maiden's heart! See?"

"It looks rather complicated."

"Are you willing?" asked William anxiously.

"Yes, Will, I am!" was the double-meaning answer; but William was too full of his subject to see the joke.

"That's right!" cried William, shaking his hand effusively. "We shall circumvent the old fellow between us. It would be such a pity, you know!"

The friend came regularly every evening and William the younger contrived that he should play cards or chess with the elder, thus leaving the way open for his own campaign with the lady secretary.

Miss Kate Wheatley talked very cleverly with the son of her employer, and occasionally the friend of William the younger missed a point through listening to the whispered, but animated, conversation of the other occupants of the room.

Before a week had slipped away, Dr. William, Jr. was convinced that victory was certain; she seemed to enjoy these evenings so much!

Dr. William, Sr. was equally confident that Miss Kate Wheatley was ready to accept him as soon as he should make her a definite proposal; he was waiting for his son to remove himself and his effects to another place, which the said son seemed in no hurry to do, before proposing. The friend also appeared to thoroughly enjoy the evenings at Dr. Banks' residence, so everybody was pleased.

One morning William the younger caught Miss Kate Wheatley gazing with unfeigned delight at a magnificent bouquet, and an uncomfortable feeling took possession of him.

That bouquet was not purchased under ten shillings, at that time of the year, he thought, but upon consideration he concluded that it might have been obtained for half that sum. The matter was more serious than he had imagined; the old gentleman was buying her flowers and she was accepting them!

This occurred for several days and finally William the younger determined to ask her who sent the floral offering. This was an artful move; he expected to see her blush and confess that she thought it was he, William the younger, who had sent them; that is, she would do so if she were in love with him.

If she had fallen in love with his father, and knew that the old gentleman was sending the flowers, she would betray the fact in some way.

Now suppose she really thought that he, the son, was the donor? He would make ambiguous remarks that would confirm the opinion, thus taking advantage of the situation and hoaxing the old fellow.

The father paying for the flowers to advance the wooing of the son! That would be getting the best of his respected parent indeed, and it would teach the old gentleman not to be so foolish as to fall in love with a young girl.

"Good morning, Miss Wheatley!" he said blandly, popping in upon her just as she was inhaling the scent of the latest bouquet. "What splendid flowers! Who sends them?"

"I have not the remotest idea!" she asseverated with such emphasis that William was bound to believe her. "Aren't they nice? It is very good of whoever sent them!"

"But surely you have asked the messenger who was the giver?" he asked, trying to assume a conscious air.

"The boy from the florist's brought them, and I couldn't ask *him!*" explained Miss Kate. "They come every day, so I suppose I shall learn before long who it is that sends them!"

William murmured: "Oh, of course!" and retired. He hoped that he had created the desired impression, but at the same time he was not happy about that daily offering. If the old gentleman were paying five shillings a day for flowers, that was thirty shillings a week, for six days, and that made nearly £80 a year.

"I'm positive they cost more than that!" was his muttered opinion. "It's nearer £200 a year that the old idiot is spending! If he goes on like that, where do I come in? He has made his will in my favour, but there won't be any more to inherit, at this rate, than if he married her himself! I'll talk to him!

"I don't like to say anything against your actions, sir," he began; "but if you're going to keep up that nonsense of spending all that money on flowers for a girl, I must protest! It isn't fair to me!"

"William," replied the elder, severely; "if I choose to do a thing I shall do it, but I haven't done it! I was waiting for you to come in so that I might remonstrate with you for doing the same thing to a young lady whom I intend to make my wife!"

"I intend to do the same, sir!" retorted William the younger, staring at William the elder. "I didn't send the flowers; do you mean to say, on your word, that you didn't send them?"

"Of course not!" exclaimed his father.

"Then there's another!" gasped the son.

The two men glared at each other in blank surprise. This was a development which neither had anticipated; it was too much to bear!

"We must find out who he is, William!" said the elder decisively. "We'll go to the florist and demand his name!"

A common enemy compelled them to unite their forces; they forgot their own differences in the face of this danger, and sallied forth together to demand information of the florist.

Miss Kate Wheatley was in the drawing-room when she heard a soft knock at the door and called out: "Come in!" The friend entered in response to her invitation.

"I saw them both go out, and I blessed my lucky stars!"

(*Concluded on page 444.*)

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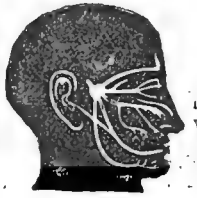

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he informed her joyfully. "I wanted to bring the flowers myself this morning, and I was scheming a way to do it without letting them know. There!" (handing her the floral tribute), "Do you like them?"

"Oh, so much!" declared Miss Kate Wheatley, blushing charmingly under his look of ardent admiration. "I didn't know that it was *you* who gave them!"

"You didn't?" he inquired in surprise. "Who did you think it was, then? I've been in love with you ever since that first evening, but I couldn't get a fair chance of telling you so. Well, I've told you now!"

He took her hands in his as if assured of her answer, and she allowed him to press her close to him and kiss her.

"I think it must have been like that with me!" she admitted, her cheeks becoming more red. "But I'm afraid I am not well enough off to——"

"Nonsense! I haven't much to boast of, but I shall make more when I am a full-fledged barrister. It might have been different if that old lady relative of mine hadn't made such a ridiculous will!"

"Oh, have you got a relative like that? So have I! She wanted me to marry a man whose very name was unknown to me, or she would disinherit me altogether! But I don't mind a bit!" And Kate hid her blushes on her lover's breast.

"What's that?" demanded her friend. "I say, what's the name of your relative?"

"My aunt's name is Miss Eliza Platt. I call her aunt 'Liza."

"Well, I'm delighted!" exclaimed the friend. "That's my relation, too! So we've actually done of our own free will what we wouldn't do at her command. We shall have to go to Aunt 'Liza and do the penitent dodge!"

"Hallo! You're here!" cried William the younger as he entered with his father at his heels. "Perhaps you can help us to solve the mystery. Someone has been sending to Miss Wheatley here"—Kate had released herself from the friend's grasp just in time—"and she does not know who it is.

"We have been to the florist's to ascertain the name of the author of this—this outrage, but all he can say is that the flowers are ordered and paid for every day by a youngish sort of a man, a sort of——"

"An odd-looking man, neither old nor young, dressed like most people, that's what he tells us!" chimed in William the elder. "Do you know anyone answering that description?"

"Don't recognise the description," replied the friend, meditatively. "Appears to be in love with her, doesn't he?"

"That's just it!" cried the Williams in a breath, forgetting the presence of Kate in their anxiety. "I am sure," added William the elder impressively, "that Miss Wheatley wouldn't fall in love with somebody she didn't know!"

This was so extremely probable that the friend assented.

"I am glad that the florist acknowledged that I paid for the flowers," he added, with assumed simplicity of countenance.

"*You!*" gasped the father and son in unison.

"Yes! I have discovered by accident that Miss Wheatley and I are relations. Before we made that discovery, we made another—that we are very much in love with each other! This proves to be a fortunate circumstance, for it enables us to carry out the wishes of a venerated aunt!"

William the elder and William the younger gazed mournfully at the pattern of the carpet. It was quite two minutes before either of the medical gentlemen spoke.

"I hope you will be very happy!" the elder said earnestly. "That wish comes straight from my heart!"

"Miss Kate must stay with us till the marriage," said the younger William softly. "We should not like to lose her all at once!"

It was lucky that the managers of a certain charitable institution never knew the contents of the last will but one made by Miss Eliza Platt, for they would have been saddened by the fact that they had lost a legacy of twenty thousand pounds. Miss Platt's solicitor earned a few more guineas by making a fresh will, in which she bequeathed the said sum to two persons whom the clergyman had just made one.

Edward Gardiner.

"I do not believe that I have a true friend in the world." "So you have been trying to borrow money, too, have you?"

"Can you show me the way to the dentist's?" "Yes. Go down that little street, then turn the corner, and listen till you hear a shriek."

"Ah, Charley, I hear you have written a book." "Yes." "What is your publisher's name?" "Can't tell yet; I've only tried three-quarters of the list so far."

Mabel: "What an interesting talker Mr. Gusher is. He always holds one when he speaks." Mrs. Gusher: "Does he? That accounts for the hair I found on his shoulder last night."

Husband: "Woo! Hoo! Good gracious! Why do you set that alarm clock so it will go off like that just at bedtime?" Wife: "That is to remind me that it's time to wind it up, my dear."

Old Skrooge: "Do you think, young man, you could support my daughter in the style to which she has been accustomed?" Her Suitor: "I could, but I'm not mean enough to do it."

"Isn't Mrs. Jarvis an agreeable neighbour?" "No; she's horrid. I gave a dinner and didn't invite her, and the mean creature lent me a lot of spoons and forks, and then sent her little boy over for them when we were just starting the second course."

"You should never point, Johnnie," said Mrs. Brown as they left the shop; "it is very rude." "But what are you going to do, ma, when you don't know the name of the thing you want to see?" "Why, let the man show you everything in the shop till he comes to the right one."

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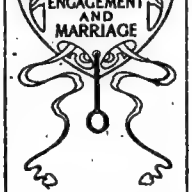

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Indigestion

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Sister's Hint.

"If you don't give me a shilling," said little Willie, "I'm going to tell about you kissing sister." "But I hadn't even thought of kissing your sister," protested the young man. "You ain't?" said Willie, puzzled. "Then I wonder what she told me to say that to you for?"

The Modern Way.

She (as he finishes mending her tyre): "Oh, thank you so much. What should I have done without you?" He: "Don't mention it. I wish I could always carry the repair kit for you." Tenderly: "May I, Eleanor?" And the two bicycles continued to lean against the grassy bank.

A Broken Melody.

"Dearest," he said, as he swung to and fro upon the gate, "I wish I might linger here for ever." She was about to say something encouraging when he got his finger caught in the hinge, and began yelling so hard that the entire neighbourhood turned out to help him loose. Then all was over between them.

Knows What It Is.

"Oh, Henry," exclaimed his wife, as she threw her arms rapturously about his neck, "I do love you so! Don't forget to leave me five pounds when you go to town this morning, will you, dear?" "And this," muttered Henry, softly disengaging himself from her fond embrace, "this is what you might call being hard pressed for money."

Love at First Sight.

Friend: "So yours was a case of love at first sight?" Mrs. Lovejoy: "Yes, indeed. I fell desperately in love with my dear husband the moment I set eyes upon him. I remember it all distinctly as if it were yesterday. I was walking with papa on the promenade at Brighton, when suddenly papa stopped and, pointing him out, said: 'There, my dear, is a man worth £120,000.'"

No Encouragement Intended.

He (in the conservatory): "Why did you lead me on to a proposal if you intended to refuse me?" She: "You do me great injustice. What have I done to make you think I loved you?" He: "In every waltz with other men you kept them almost at arm's length, but when waltzing with me you leant your head on my shoulder, and let me almost carry you." She: "That was to keep my feet off the floor, so that you wouldn't step on my toes."

At His Own Expense.

Mr. Bluff: "Look here, young man, you're always going about with my daughter, and I want to know what your intentions are regarding her?" Young Man: "I really have no intentions, sir." Mr. Bluff (angrily): "Then what do you mean by amusing yourself at my daughter's expense?" Young Man (airily): "I'm not amusing myself at your daughter's expense, sir, but at my own expense. I always pay for the theatre tickets and refreshments."

Lack of Confidence.

"May I kiss you, Miss Jane?" "I am sorry to see, Mr. Briggs, that you, too, are affected by the prevailing cause of business depression." "And that is?" "Lack of confidence." Then he kissed her.

Too Dreadful to Contemplate.

Angelina: "When one of us dies I shall go and live somewhere in the country, all among the woods and wild flowers." Edwin: "But, dearest, supposing that you were to die first?" Angelina: "Oh, don't let us think of anything so dreadful."

That Made a Difference.

Husband: "I really think you might have had that ball dress made a little bit higher in the neck—to say nothing of the back." Wife: "I'll have it changed if you wish; but the stuff cost two guineas a yard." Husband: "U'm—well, never mind."

Brutal Behaviour.

Ancient Brute: "Er, excuse me, but doesn't my open window trouble you?" Lady Passenger: "Oh, thank you! I was feeling it a little." Ancient Brute: "Well, I wouldn't run any risk of catching cold. There are some empty carriages forward."

Man's Heavy Burden.

Mrs. De Science: "If I am able to carry the baby about, I should think you ought to be." Professor De Science: "You forget, my dear, that an average man has to carry an atmospheric pressure of fifteen tons, while woman, being smaller, does not have to carry over ten or twelve tons."

Why She Didn't Bow.

"Have I done anything to offend you, darling?" he asked brokenly. "To-day you passed me without bowing, and now you sit there with such an air of hauteur and pride that——" "Arthur," interrupted the girl with an unbending air, but in her voice a cadence sweeter than music in the night, "I have a stiff neck."

In a Good Cause.

Wife: "George, this burning of the candle at both ends means an untimely grave. It is nearly twelve o'clock. Come to bed." George: "But I'm doing this night work in order to find money enough to buy your birthday present." Wife: "Well, if you will persist in working, of course, I can't stop it. Good-night, dear."

A Thoughtful Girl.

"No wonder the pleasures of courting have declined," said the stout youth. "Just look at the flimsiness of these modern chairs." And he pointed to a slender affair of white bamboo touched with gilt. "You mustn't judge by appearances," said the stout girl softly. "I've had that chair thoroughly braced with the very best of steel rods, and it is now guaranteed to stand a pressure of sixty pounds to the square inch." Then they both sat down on it as a final test.

On the Benches in the Park.

Mr. Rice: "May—may we sit here, sir?" Confirmed Celibate: "If you're perfectly sure that you love each other just as much as ever you did, and that you ain't sorry a bit, and that you never did love anybody else as you do her, and that it ain't too cold for popsy-wopsy in this night air—why I can stand it. But don't you try me too hard, young man. I've been here for six weeks and encountered seventy-nine couples."

His Business-Like Way.

Young Mr. Bizz (briskly, to fair proprietor of photograph gallery): "I've dropped in, Miss Frame, without much preparation, in the style I usually do when I make up my mind I want anything. Can you take me just as I am?" Miss Frame: "Certainly, Mr. Bizz. What style do you wish—cabinet or carte?" Mr. Bizz: "What style? Great Cæsar! Did you think I'd come in with these clothes on to have my photograph taken? I'm asking you to marry me, Miss Frame."

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Conducted by CYNTHIA.

[In this page are answered any letters from readers dealing with affairs of the heart, tangles in domestic life, or points of etiquette. All communications must be addressed to Miss Cynthia Hamilton, c/o the Editor of SHORT STORIES.*]*

The Absent Lover.

DEPRESSED is engaged to a young American girl, whom he met while in the States. She stayed here for several months with some friends, and was on the most intimate terms with her lover. However, DEPRESSED believes the girl's parents are not in favour of the match, though they did not object when it was announced.

* * * * *

Some weeks ago the girl returned to America. She has now been there some weeks, and to the concern of DEPRESSED her letters to him have been couched in the coolest of terms—quite different from the tone which marked their own meetings.

* * * * *

DEPRESSED believes the girl's parents have been saying things against him, and, as he is three thousand miles away, and has no direct evidence, he does not know what to do. Can I advise him of a course of action? He fears that if something is not done, the girl may be induced not to return to Britain.

* * * * *

Before you jump to conclusions, be sure you are right about the mischief-making you suspect. When people are abroad—particularly in such a hurrying country as America—they are apt to neglect such necessary things as letter-writing altogether, or else they write in a hasty manner.

* * * * *

Perhaps your sweetheart is having a very busy time, and is therefore not giving you as much attention as you might expect in her correspondence. That is, of course, inexplicable in a case where there is real love, though it is not so serious a matter that you can regard it as dangerous. I should write to her, hinting that your affection for her has not altered in any way, and hope that it is the same with her.

* * * * *

I quite understand that the whole thing must be causing you great anxiety, and can only offer you my sympathy. Unless you are yourself able to go to America to see things put right, you are handicapped. If you have an intimate friend over there, he might be able to do a diplomatic service to you by inquiring how things are working.

* * * * *

I cannot believe that if the girl really loves you, as evidently she does, she would be turned away from you. If so she must be a very weak, changeable character. Girls away from their lovers are rather apt to go to the extreme of writing to them too often, to the neglect of their friends. I hope you will find things will turn out all right. The next mail or so may put an entirely new complexion on matters.

A Wedding Problem.

JOHN A. has been invited to a wedding. He believes a girl will also be there to whom he was once engaged. They, however, have spoken scarcely at all since the breaking-off. He believes she would like a reunion, but fears it would not be so acceptable to himself. Would I recommend his going to the wedding?

* * * * *

Weddings have a strange influence over love affairs generally. They have often been known to hurry on other weddings, and to bring about reconciliations. I should go. You do not know how you may feel towards the girl when you see her again under such conditions. I should give it a trial, at any rate. Do not be too sure as to your own feelings.

Should He Emigrate?

"CRYPT" is engaged to a young man, and as they cannot foresee any prospect of being married for many years, he wishes to go out to Canada in order to better himself. "CRYPT" wants to know whether it would be selfish of her not to let him go, and whether she ought to promise to bind herself to him for an indefinite time.

* * * * *

I can quite understand you find it hard to let your *fiancé* go "CRYPT," but though Canada may sound attractive it will not be well for him to go unless he has a definite situation there. In Canada well paid work is just as hard to obtain as here. I would advise you to wait until prospects here seem more favourable—even though it be a matter of years—unless he can get a definite post abroad.

* * * * *

Regarding your question as to whether you should promise to wait for him if he really does go away, that is a matter in which you yourselves should be the best judges. It will be more comfortable, I think, for both of you, if no definite agreement is come to, as so many things may happen during years of absence, and though in many cases "absence makes the heart grow fonder," such does not always follow.

The Persistent Lover and Indifferent Girl.

"HEARTSICK" is in love with a girl who apparently does not return the affection. He is a most persistent lover, however, and for a time she seemed as though she really loved him, but now she is quite indifferent to all his attentions, though her friends tell him that she does care for him. What is he to do?

* * * * *

I think your best plan, "HEARTSICK," will be to settle the matter once and for all by stating your intentions to the girl, letting her see that you are quite serious, and then abiding by what she says. From what you say in your letter she is evidently unable to make up her mind, and the sooner you let her see that you mean business the better.

* * * * *

I am sorry to have to acknowledge that some girls like to keep a man dangling in a state of uncertainty, little thinking what his feelings are during the time of probation, and the girl you are fond of may be one of these, though you say that she only accepts your presents under protests. Perhaps she cares for someone else, but does not like to give you your *congé* until she is assured that her affection in that quarter is returned. Anyhow, she will feel bound to give you a definite answer one way or the other, if you let her see that you are serious in your proposal.

Cynthia

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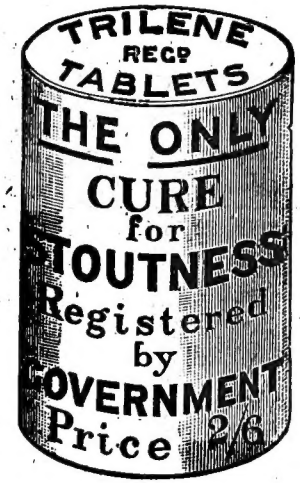

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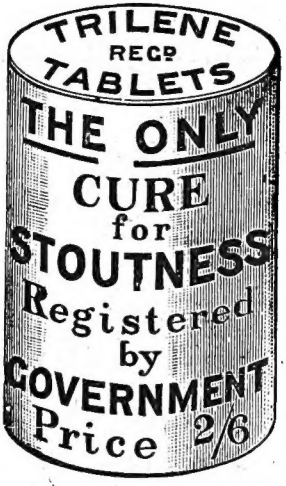

SAMPLES OF TESTIMONIALS.

"87 Alexandra Road, Norwich, October 19th, 1896.

Gentlemen,—In reference to Trilene Tablets, I may say that my wife found the greatest possible benefit from the use of them; their action was rapid, and exceeded our utmost expectations, as they were also most beneficial to the respiratory organs. My wife was many years growing so stout, but although the disease was, I consider chronic, the Tablets soon reduced the same completely.

"Yours faithfully, J. R. CANHAM."

COUNTESS SECKENDORFF, of Berlin, writes: "The Tablets greatly benefited me personally, and I am recommending them to friends."

MISS CHATTERTON, 7 Salisbury Villas, Banstead, Surrey, says: "I weighed 12st. 8lb., but am now 11st., and getting much better."

Nurse CROUCHER, a6 Mrs. Bennett's, 14 Buckleigh Road, Streatham, says: "I lost 9lb. from the box I took."

Mrs. D. BURTON, of Silverleigh, Tunbridge, writes: "I am very pleased with difference in size, my friends all telling me how much thinner I am getting."

Miss NORTHLEDGE, The Laurels, Risebolm Road, Lincoln, says: "The Tablets reduced me 1st., so that I am cured."

"West Cornforth, Ferryhill.

Mr. WM. USHER says: "A sister of mine, who was 17st., was greatly reduced by your Tablets to 15st."

Extract from *The Lady*, September 3rd, 1896: "Many stout persons have suffered untold agonies in unavailing efforts to reduce their bulk, either by means of severe dieting, or by taking more or less deleterious drugs; but all these pains would have been saved if they had only invested in a box of the wonderful Trilene Tablets, which are quite harmless, containing neither mercury, arsenic, nor any other mineral poison, and which are an unfailing cure for obesity."

MRS. T. BOSTON, Cambridge Villas, Clifford Street, South Wigston, says: "I congratulate you on your wonderful Tablets. My weight at first starting them was 11st. 7lb., and I now weigh 9st. 11lb."

Mr. MCLEOD, 44 Calside, Paisley, writes: "I have been cured. If you want to know my weight now, it is 10st.; reduced 1st. 8lb., and I am quite content."

COUNT EHRENWAUD, of Liatorp, Sweden, writes, 9th Oct., 1899: "The person who took Tablets lost 18lb. during the cure.

Mr. GIBBS, 147 Richmond Park, Kimberworth, Rotherham, says: "Since I began with them they have reduced me 2st. 8lb., and I am pleased to say I am a great deal better in health and in every way."

Mrs. FENTON, 11 Wood Street, Tyldesley, writes: "Been fat all my life, but now your Tablets tell a tale. I have lost 17lb. already and am delighted."

Mrs. MARY WILLIAMS, of Old Yard, near Tredol, Bagilit, Wales, writes Nov. 22nd, 1898: "Your Tablets reduced me 2st., and have benefited me greatly."

A. M. PRATT, of Ongar House, Ongar, says: "My weight is so much reduced it is unnecessary to take more. The reduction of weight was from 12st. 6lb. to 10st. 4lb."

Mrs. H. COX, 28 Watnall Road, Hucknall Torkard, writes: "The box of Tablets has reduced my weight 1½ stones."

Mrs. PEARCE, Armstrong Road, Benwell: "Reduced from 12st. to 9½st., and do not get any heavier."

Col.-Sergt. WHITTLE, of East Lancashire Regt., Burnley, Lancs., says: "A man in our regiment in 1901 lost several stone from taking your Tablets."

Mrs. ROLLITT, of North Farm, Letwell, says: "Tablets have done a world of good—reduced 14lb. already without altering diet."

Mrs. W. A. RADFORD, of High Street, New Brinsley, Eastwood, writes: "Before taking Tablets I was 46 inches round wrist, now I am 32 inches. I hope soon to be 23. I could hardly move or get up, now I get about easily. Please use this as you wish."

Countess FURSTENBERG, of Germany, writes: "They act speedily and well."

The Princess LIECHTENSTEIN writes from Landsberg, Austria: "Pray send me your excellent Tablets."

Mrs. WEAVER, of Greenpits Villa, Ross, Hereford, writes: "I am reduced from 13st. 8lb. to 11st. You may use this if you like."

Mrs. CROSSLEY, of Rose Hill, Torver, nr. Coniston, says: "There is a very decided diminution of fat. I am delighted, and cannot speak too highly in praise of Tablets. My heart is better, and I can breathe so much easier. You may refer to me as often as you like."

Lady C. CONRAD writes from Wiesbaden: "I am very pleased with your Tablets.

Miss JANE CARTER of Forthampton House, Tewkesbury, says: "The Tablets are of the greatest valu I am reduced many stone, and shall be pleased to recommend them."

Mr. THOS BLAKELY, of 37 The Grove, Bedford, writes: "I have lost a little over 42lb. since taking your Tablets, and my case causes much local interest."

Miss F. L. BALL, 47 Chesterfield Road, St. Andrews, Bristol, writes: "I am quite cured through your Tablets. They improve the figure, and greatly relieve shortness of breath."

Miss PATIENT, of Woodberry, Theydon Bois: "Feel great benefit from Tablets. I have lost 2st., and am sufficiently reduced."

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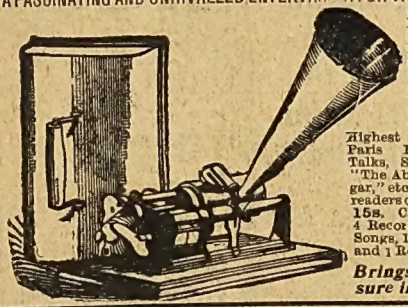

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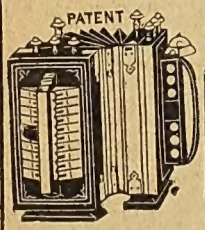

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